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THE SOUL OF THE RUSSIAN

THE SOUL OF THE RUSSIAN

BY MARJORIE LETHBRIDGE
AND ALAN LETHBRIDGE
(AUTHOR OF "THE NEW RUSSIA")

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TO

"DAD"

WITH OUR LOVE

PREFACE

IN spite of the war, and in spite of the friendship between Russia and England, a friendship becoming more firmly cemented every day, there are still a great many people to whom our Slav ally remains merely a name. True, books in plenty have recently dealt with that country in many varying forms, but, in the main, they have consisted either of consecutive narrative requiring steady reading, or have been serious works making appeal chiefly to the student.

The joint authors of this little book hope to find their public amongst those whom Russia is beginning to interest but who, perhaps, have neither the time nor inclination for a more connected work. These sketches are all short; there is, as a rule, no relation one to the other, and their separate perusal will only occupy a matter of minutes. But—and this is the end

the authors hope to have attained—it is possible that they may whet the appetite of the reader to know more about Russia; they may encourage enquiry and study; and they may be the seeds from which will arise a love for greatly misunderstood Russia, such as the authors have for her themselves. If, in a single instance, any one of these things is accomplished, they will feel that their labours will not have been in vain. Acknowledgment is due to *The Outlook*, *The Standard* and *The Evening Standard* for permission to reproduce many of these sketches, and the grateful thanks of the authors is extended to the editors of these papers.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
The Pilgrim Spirit	1
The Monstrous Affront	8
An Apostle of Dreams	18
My Friend Sobolof	25
Russian Travelling Companions	32
General Ivanoff	41
The Cossack	48
The Steppe	56
My Russian Household	63
Russia in Travail	72
Skóbeleff	81
The Ikon	88
The "Credo" of the Moujik	96
Vereschagin	102
A Russian Picnic	109
Omsk	118
A Siberian Exile of 1800	136
Siberia and the War	145
Russia	154

PAGE

"TANIA" 162

KIEFF 170

RIVER TRAVEL IN RUSSIA 177

RUSSIA'S NORTHERN GATEWAY—ARCHANGEL . . . 186

WARSAW: A RETROSPECT 196

A POLISH AIDE-DE-CAMP OF NAPOLEON . . . 205

TANIA'S ORTHODOXY 215

THE SONG OF THE MOUJIK 223

RUSSIAN RAILWAY ADVANCE 228

THE SOUL OF THE RUSSIAN

THE PILGRIM SPIRIT

WHAT is the underlying motive power which has made the Russian soldier what he is to-day? I answer without hesitation "Faith." Any dictionary will supply information of a cut-and-dried nature concerning the exact signification of this quality, but who will deny that living example is not worth all the precepts ever printed? Perhaps it is that the busy West has not time nowadays to trouble itself with matters other than those which can be seen and felt; and therein, I fancy, lies the basis of the misconceptions which have for so long separated us from Russia. The Slav moves in a different world, a world of dreams, maybe; a world of the intangible, of the speculative; in fact, in a world as far removed from the precision of the

scientist as is the furthest star from this earth.

* * * * *

Now the Russian pilgrim is a type worthy of study, because he embodies all those qualities which represent the essence of the Slav nature, and which may provide some sort of key to what otherwise would appear bizarre and incomprehensible to the foreigner. For consider: like the pilgrims of old, these enthusiasts recking nothing of difficulty, suffering, or possible danger, will leave their homes in some far-away corner of the Russian Empire, totally unprovided with funds in many cases, and will tramp along cheerfully and doggedly until they reach their much-desired bourne. It may be Solovetz, Kieff, or some other shrine, but they know (note the "know") its holiness shall purge the sins of a lifetime and provide a viaticum for that last pilgrimage we all must make. Those without money go confidently forward, spurred on by the inborn knowledge that their undertaking belongs to the spirit world, to the region of souls and not of bodies, and that each day as it dawns marks a step forward in a duty instilled

into them by their mere unreasoning, unquestioning, childlike faith.

* * * * *

One is accustomed to the pilgrimages of the West, with their accompaniment of railway travelling, carriages, and a modicum of comfort; these are organised, conducted, and need a certain financial outlay. In Russia all this is absent; the call is to the individual, and it is obeyed. The distances covered, the pilgrims themselves, sometimes old, sometimes infirm, often destitute, fill one with something not far removed from awe. Imagine the case of a man and wife in Aberdeen, their weekly wage their income, and that wage barely sufficient for their needs. Imagine the strength of the impulse which would lead them to walk the entire way to Canterbury in order to pray at the tomb of St. Thomas à Becket. Without money, imagine what their fate would be—possibly imprisonment for begging. If they attempted to explain they would meet with a raised eyebrow and a remand for medical inquiry, and if they succeeded in convincing their inquisitors of the harmlessness of their intentions, imagine the

paragraphs which would stud the Press concerning these strange creatures. Then realise that the journey from Aberdeen to Canterbury is but an afternoon's walk compared to that from the foothills of the Urals to the great Russian shrines. In any case the latter must take weeks, perhaps months, and who shall say that Death shall spare the pilgrim. Such stories are only too common: departure full of hope, the enveloping mist of great distance, and then everlasting silence. Those left behind weep and go their way in the full belief that what is, is best. It may not be the perfection of logic, but logic plays no part in the make-up of the Russian peasant, and in that direction I am inclined to think he is no loser.

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The pilgrim is one of the commonest sights in rural Russia. You will see him tramping resignedly along the road with a stout staff to aid him, and holding a kerchief into which are packed his most precious belongings. Sometimes he will be accompanied by his wife or his mother, for, as regards the latter, age is no bar to enterprise under these conditions, and many are the old dames more

fitted for a quiet fireside whom I have seen embark in the monastery steamer plying from Archangel to Solovetz. And there is an engaging freemasonry about these wanderers —just that touch of brotherhood which one can imagine was the motif in the life of the early Christians. The kerchiefs are opened and display the domestic larder—black bread, cucumbers, and perhaps a morsel of sausage. You pass, your eye is caught, and there is a mute invitation to pause awhile, gossip a little, and, if so inclined, partake of the repast. This last you tactfully decline, but accept the offer of some sunflower seeds which, to the Russian peasants, are as chocolates to our children. Provided the supply lasts they will cheerfully eat them all day, shelling them between their teeth with a dexterity born of long experience. Of course you are asked the regulation question, "Where are you going?" and should you reply "To the monastery," then indeed you are accepted at face value as one of this great family. I have mentioned the many miles covered by these pilgrims, but that aspect of the subject quite fails to impress them. Rather is their attitude

one of intense thankfulness that at last it has been permitted to them to make their way thus far to offer up their humble petitions and prayers at the shrine they love so well.

* * * * *

Solovetz itself may well fill these simple souls with inspiration. The many-hued domes of this vast fortress-monastery, flanked by rocky, pine-clad ridges, and facing the restless waters of the White Sea, appeal irresistibly to the imagination. Over all broods an intense quiet, broken only by the wild calls of the sea birds. Here is a place fashioned by nature for spiritual communion, and its saintly founders grasped that fact when they made it their haven over five centuries ago.

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It is this spirituality of the peasant which must be grasped if Russia is to be understood. It supplies the explanation as to why the Teuton grip on the Slav has proved so irksome, more especially to the masses on the land. Contagion with the town has dulled this higher sensibility and has tended towards scepticism and disdain—both indicative of the German poison now being expelled from

the Russian system. This is why the Russian Minister of the Interior stated in a recent speech that whatever pessimism there was in the cities concerning the progress of the war, in the villages and on the land there was none. In fact, he went further and said that fathers were building new houses for their sons against their return at the conclusion of a victorious war.

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It is the pilgrim spirit which is here evidenced, the confidence in the justice of a cause and in the supreme strength which alone can be claimed by justice. Sometimes one hears criticism of the Orthodox Church; it is idle to speculate as to the future of that great organisation so far as its relations to the rest of Christendom are concerned, but of this there is no doubt—Orthodoxy and the moujik are the living forces which will purge great Russia of the Germans once and for always.

A. L.

THE MONSTROUS AFFRONT

THERE are many histories of Russia, old and new, long and short, reliable and the reverse. There are biographies, chatty and serious, of Czars and Czarinas. There are memoirs—often scandalous or spiteful—by well-known Russians, or by those who take shelter under pseudonyms. But for sheer delight I can recommend "An Impartial History of the Life and Actions of Peter Alexowitz, The Present Czar of Muscovy," written by a British Officer in the service of the Czar, and published in 1723. The anonymous warrior is a better master of the sword than of the pen; his sentences flagrantly disregard the classic rule which tells us "never use a preposition to end a sentence with"; and he has a decidedly German longing to separate two portions of a verb by the length of a page. Nevertheless, his unmistakable gusto in the deeds which he chronicles makes them live as vividly while we

read as when he wrote them down. And in the midst of wars and war's alarms is inserted as pretty a teapot tempest as ever troubled the serene brains of the Foreign Office and one which, as it turned out, had a far-reaching effect upon the laws of nations respecting the liabilities of ambassadors. With the aid of the "British Officer," Mr. Secretary Boyle, Monsieur A. de Mateuoff (Ambassador Extraordinary of his Czarish Majesty), and the illustrious assistance of Peter the Great and Queen Anne, I will endeavour to relate the history of this "extraordinary affront."

The first official information received by the Secretary of State (Mr. Boyle), is a letter dated July 22nd, 1708, from the incensed Mateuoff, who trusts that Her Majesty will give him "a Satisfaction proportionate to the unparralleled Affront which was put upon me Yesterday in the Evening, in the Street called Charles Street. . . . the Bailiff had the Rashness to Arrest me in my Coach, and to carry me a Prisoner to the Black Raven, a scandalous House, without notifying me the reason, and to abuse me, by thrusting himself into my Coach, and seizing on my Person, after taking away my Sword, Hat and Cane."

He was insulted very rudely, says the "British Officer," "by some private Persons; who finding his Excellency had had Audience of Leave of the Queen and was going away; and pretending to imagine that he would leave the Kingdom, as it were in Cognito, without paying a few Debts, employed some Bailiffs to Arrest him."

The Ambassador waits four days for a reply to this letter, but, receiving none, writes again to Mr. Secretary Boyle commenting on this fact in one long wrathful sentence and adding that therefore "you cannot take it ill that I intreat you to get a Pass-port for me as soon as possible, and without Delay, to the End that I may forthwith go out of this Kingdom." This rouses Mr. Boyle to reply. He protests his horror at the "enormous Procedure," and informs the victim that "seven of the Principal Accomplices" in that "desperate Attempt" have been imprisoned. The Queen is "extreamly concerned," and Mr. Boyle is grieved that M. de Mateuoff "expresses so much earnestness to Depart." But this does not soothe the infuriated Muscovite. "Sir," he writes on the same day, "Pursuant to your Word which I obtained this Day, I waited from Noon till about Half an Hour after Three a-Clock for the

Resolution in Writing about the solemn Complaints I to you the 22nd wrote Instant, but for as much as the Business very much resembles so many other Promises, which proved Ineffectual in other Affairs, I shall leave it to your Discretion, and only intreat you to send me a Pass-port for myself and Family: Sir, I expect at least this Favour from your kind disposition." Matters were looking serious and the passport was at once despatched to where Mateuoff and his family sat, valises in hand, prepared to shake the dust of England from their feet for ever. With this document came the information that ten more persons had been imprisoned and Mr. Boyle thanked His Excellency for his letter—an effort of politeness which speaks well for his temper but which was received with scepticism on the part of Mateuoff, who left immediately for Holland.

Now Czar Peter comes upon the scene, with a lengthy letter in Latin to "The Most Serene Queen of Great Britain." In this, the "unheard of and flagitious outrage" was discussed in every detail and a few new ones were added. Thus we discover that the Ambassador's "Cloathes" were torn by the bailiffs, that the amount of his

debt was fifty pounds and that, while detained at the Black Raven, Secretary Walpole (undoubtedly Sir Robert Walpole) "only came to the House, not to set him at Liberty but to be an Eye Witness of this usage" thus adding insult to injury. Peter lays down in no equable phrases his opinion of this "grievous affront," as it concerns himself so nearly, desires the Queen, whose "Serenity" must have been somewhat disturbed, to make an example of the offenders and upon failure of satisfaction "we shall be compelled to obtain it by way of Reprisal." Once more Mr. Secretary Boyle explains to the injured Ambassador in Holland that a certain length of time must inevitably transpire before the sinners can be brought to trial. A Bill is to be introduced into Parliament "for establishing and securing the Privileges of Ambassadors and other Foreign Ministers to prevent like outrages for the future."

Also that the Queen is proving her vast affection for all Russians by specially entertaining two young Muscovite Princes. The Ambassador, however, is far from appeased. He replies sarcastically that the Bill in question will probably allay the just fears of other foreign

diplomatic representatives, but he considers the legal delay highly prejudicial to satisfactory ending as far as he himself is concerned. And "As to the Honours done to the two young Noble Men, who are taken for Muscovite Princes," they soften him not a jot.

By February, 1709, all legal formalities had been observed and fourteen persons, including owners of the melodious names of Isaac Spiltumb and Andrew Slan, were tried and found guilty of the "terrible Affront," but as the case was without precedent the Lord Chief Justice could not determine what should be their sentence, but postponed it till the following term for decision to be made by all the judges in the kingdom. When this news, suitably seasoned with soft speeches and a request to content himself "in waiting with your wonted Prudence and Moderation," reached Amsterdam, the temper of His Czarish Majesty's Ambassador may easily be imagined. He replies in bitter words and declares himself to be in no wise satisfied. Once more Peter himself wrote to the "Serene Anne" but the affair was no further advanced. Neither the Czar of Muscovy nor his Ambassador had any patience with the tortuous mazes of

English jurisprudence. It is only fair to Peter to admit that, had he been King of England, Isaac Spiltumb and his friends would probably have been compelled to drink bumpers of boiling brandy without any legal preliminaries whatever. "Deeds not words" was Peter's motto and the "monstrous Affront" grew in heinousness and hideousness with each day. At last the Queen in desperation, proposed "a solemn embassy . . . to make an Acknowledgement for the Affront and to desire his Czarish Majesty to be pacifyed." Anne was trembling for her Russian trade, and with good reason! Mr. Charles Whitworth was selected for this rather unpleasant duty and duly arrived at Moscow in February, 1710—one year and seven months after the receipt of the "unpardonable affront" by Monsieur Andrew Artimonides de Mateuoff. Our chronicler was evidently an eyewitness of the gorgeous procession which left the Ambassador's residence in the morning of the eighth of February (old style) for the Czar's palace. Mr. Whitworth rode in a coach with the Czar's Chief Carver and Cup Bearer, followed by twenty other coaches filled with nobles of the Russian Court and the Ambassador's suite, "all richly cloathed, answerable

to the Coaches in which they Rode." The two regiments of Preobrajensky and Semenovsky Guards greeted them on their arrival with the salute of honour due to the Ambassador, "making a very fine Shew, the Richness of their Cloathes and the neatness of their Arms and Accoutrements setting off the comely Men; the Officers at their head made the most Splendid Appearance that can be imagined." Finally, after being "complimented" by a Gentleman of the Bedchamber, a Councillor of State and a Privy Councillor, Mr. Whitworth reached the presence of the Czar. His speech which he made in English, was an account of the severe though tardy punishment eventually meted out to Spiltumb, Slan and Co.; a relation of the horror which swept over the whole of England like a tidal wave at the unspeakable affront to the representative of his Czarish Majesty (wily Mr. Whitworth!); and lastly a plea for the continuance of "the Free Trade, which our ancestors began first by way of Archangel, with great expense and Loss of Abundance of Men."

A personal letter from Anne to Peter was then read, translations of both speech and letter being given in German and Russian; the former for

the benefit of the foreign Ambassadors, the latter for the Muscovite Nobility. In a terse speech, in which some remnants of acidity still lingered, Peter told the Ambassador his apology was accepted. He requested that the offenders be released from prison and that his Ambassador be refunded all costs and damages "which he has been obliged to be at and to suffer on Account of the Affront;" also that the Queen should give Monsieur de Mateuoff his "letter of Recredence which he refused to accept when he left London as well as the usual Present and the Yacht which her Majesty caused to be offered to him." These promised, Peter expressed himself content, as well he might, and Mr. Whitworth then resigned himself to a three days' entertainment by the Carver, who "treated him with the greatest Plenty, Delicacy and Magnificence." Let us hope, for the sake of our Ambassador, that his suite included a leach!

"Thus," says the British Officer, "ended this Affair, in which, some people thought the Queen stooped to [*sic*] low to the Czar; as if the Czar had not been a Prince of Fame and Power, as merited so much Consideration; but the Queen and her Council knew better what

Figure the Czar made in the World and of what Use the Commerce of Great Britain to the Russian Dominions was of."

Mr. Secretary Boyle (afterwards Lord Charleton) must also have heaved a sigh of relief, since he had exhausted every suitable adjective fittingly to describe the " outrageous affront."

M. L.

AN APOSTLE OF DREAMS

PRIOR to the reign of Peter the Great, Russian history is as though enveloped in the murk of some lurid conflagration, through the smoke of which one now and again discerns the outlines of great figures which arrest the attention and stir the imagination before being once more swallowed up in the surrounding obscurity. To this category may justly be relegated Youri Krijanich, the Serb. It is profoundly interesting, taking into consideration the position of Serbia to-day and the historic ideals for which Russia is now fighting, to recall the fact that, from a Serb, Russia first acquired the realisation that Slavdom represented something more than a name, that, in truth, it embodied an undeveloped birthright. It was not until about 1860 that the Russian historian Bezsonoff collected and collated the works of this Pan-Slav apostle, who died in the midst of his labours in 1684.

Briefly, then, to sketch his life and his work. Born in 1617, in Austrian Croatia, Krijanich came of noble stock and made his studies with the Jesuits, who at that period supplied practically the only education offered to the youths of well-to-do families. From the very first he seems to have manifested a great antipathy for foreigners, especially Germans, and appears to have had visions of a union of Slavonic tribes under Catholic protection. In due course he received the tonsure and repaired to Rome, where he attracted the attention of the Congregation of Rites who apparently encouraged him to some extent in his dreams. At any rate, his witnessing the treatment offered a Muscovite Embassy in Vienna decided him to go personally to Moscow and there attempt to arouse a national feeling. This was a bold undertaking indeed, having regard for Muscovite suspicions and the susceptibilities of the Orthodox clergy. But, undeterred, he went forward and reached Moscow about 1660. Of his activities there little is known except that, in January, 1661, he was summarily banished to Tobolsk in Siberia, presumably on account of what the Orthodox regarded as his mischievous activity. He was, however, generously

treated in the matter of money, made the journey thither in comfort and was denied nothing in reason whilst an exile. In the words of Mr. Bezsonoff, "Krijanich lived two hundred years too soon to be appreciated, and perhaps the best thing which could have happened to him was what did happen, viz.; that he was sent to live in leisure, and not destitute of books either, to work for all the Slavonian world of the future, in Siberia."

It may be convenient to say here that his exile, in spite of many petitions, lasted until the year 1676, when he was released as an act of clemency by the Tsar Feodor upon the latter's accession to the throne. During that period he received annually ninety roubles, which in modern currency would approximate to £110, and it must be remembered that, in those days, living in Siberia cost practically nothing—a chicken could be bought for twopence halfpenny, and food generally was on the same scale. Hence, Krijanich had little about which to complain except that he was an exile. At the same time, taking into consideration the character of the man, one can but imagine that his sojourn was not too irksome to his enthusiastic soul and that

release found no bitterness. He had, as Mr. Bezsonoff so aptly states, found his life's work in the Siberian silence, and who shall say that, given other conditions, he could have transmitted a message to the nineteenth and twentietl centuries, the appeal of which grows stronger a the war continues. Before considering hi writings it may be well to state that he wa received hospitably in Moscow upon his releas and was permitted to carry on his humble duties as a parish priest in Poland until h died, in 1684, seven or eight years, as Mr Bezsonoff says, after he had left "Russia and Dreamland."

Turning now to his writings; possibly the most famous passage he ever penned is the following, which mirrors correctly the intense personal convictions of the modern Russian and which supplies the *raison d'être* of Russia's grim determination to win this war. "No people under the sun have ever been so shamed or wronged as have we Slavs by the Germans. Nay, we are stifled by the multitude of these aliens. They do fool us and lead us by the nose. They do sit upon our backs and ride us like cattle. They do call us swine and dogs, while thinking

themselves equal to gods and ourselves as simpletons. Upon that which is wrung of our tears and sweat and of the forced fasting of the Russian people, do these foreigners, these German officers and merchants, grow fat." Could anything better epitomise Germany's attitude towards Russia up to the very moment when war was realised to be the sole solution of the problem? Russian history is one long chronicle of intolerable German domination, forced upon an unwilling people through the fault of short-sighted or corrupt politicians.

Again, during his weary exile, when a faint hope of release encouraged him, he writes as follows to his friend Simeon of Polotsk: "It will be well if I can obtain the possibility of rendering the Hossoudar a service for which, in the judgment of all, I should deserve to be liberated from hence. And if any say that the service rendered did *not* deserve it, then let the Tsar send me back or otherwise punish me. I will show how Russia is now threatened with a very great calamity unless timely measures be taken to avert it." The danger to which he referred is probably the same about which he later wrote more freely, namely, the risk of

employing officers of German nationality in the Russian armies, a practice which he passionately denounces as fatal. It is worthy of remark that, in this present struggle, the officers in high commands are all of pure Slav birth and the German element, which had considerable influence, has been relegated to the background. In his argument he suggests, "The Niemtsi (Germans) are necessary for us to teach our people military science." His answer: "As for their training of horsemen and cavalry we have no need to learn that. And as to foot soldiers, if we have not by this time learned all they have to teach us, we never shall. . . . It is time, therefore, to send away the Germans from us once and for all, unless we are to be their slaves for ever. There is a good opportunity given us now by the conduct of the German merchants, to put an end to the existing commercial contracts, obtained by cunning and presents, and to send them away." This might really have been penned by some patriot in 1914, instead of over two and a half centuries ago.

The double-headed eagle of Russia comes under his condemnation; he criticises it as a German device and calls the title of Czar or

Cæsar an ill-omened one, since the Slavonian name for a Sovereign has been ignored. His description of Poland I feel I must give in its original Latin, since its phrasing is so transparent that the slightest acquaintance with that language will suffice to catch its meaning. "Polonia est Nova Babylonia, Tsiganorum, Germanorum, Armenorum et Scotorum colonia; Paradisus Hebraeorum, infernus rusticorum; aurifodina advenarum, sedes gentium vagabundarum; comitiatorum assidua hospitatio, populi perpetua inquietatio, alienigenarum dominatio. Quam despuit omnis natio."

If Krijanich can look from the beyond, he must see the dawn of the day when his dreams shall materialise.

A. L.

MY FRIEND SOBOLOF

TO the lover of quaint types drawn from the fringes of modern civilisation, Archangel, before the war, offered a rich gallery. And even now that it has attained to a greater dignity, now that its streets are thronged with hurrying crowds who, a year ago, knew not its position on the map, whilst its wharves are piled mountain high with merchandise, I am still certain that amongst its citizens there cannot be found a more pronounced individuality than that of my friend Sobolof, the Samoyede. For the moment I cannot recall the precise method of our introduction which occurred, however, in the piping times of peace. I know that no third party played intermediary, that merely it so happened that, one morning, I saw peeping into my room a brown, wizened, flattened visage with absurdly high cheek bones and slanting, deep-set twinkling eyes. In me this apparition probably scented a likely market for the disposal of certain goods, while my instinct

warned me that here was an individual of no common parts. Certain preliminaries preceded explanations. A mute gesture from me invited him to enter which he did with becoming gravity, removing his brown "Trilby" with the grace of a courtier, bowing deeply and crossing himself fervently before the holy ikon in its accustomed corner, thereafter standing a few moments in an attitude of devotion the while his lips moved rapidly and silently. Then only was it that he came down to more mundane matters. His clothes were worthy of a tout selling an encyclopædia. A large gold-coloured chain of great size crossed his waistcoat, a shark's tooth tie-pin adorned a brilliantly hued tie and his boots were those patent leather abominations with bulging toe-caps, an Americanism highly popular with a certain class of Russian. But of his business: well, he explained briefly that he could supply me with anything that I wanted, from articles carved in walrus ivory to Samoyede slippers, coats and even toys. I showed no enthusiasm. A rapid glance at the ikon and he suggested furs. He declared that he knew how these could be obtained at prices which I should consider ridiculous. Experience taught me that

they were! After that he enumerated every article which the fertility of his inventive faculty could picture, but all to no purpose. His humility became extreme and once more his gaze drifted towards the ikon and a sudden thought struck me. "Have you any old ikons?" I queried. "You will buy them?" was his surprised response. "I will bring some to-morrow, oh yes, I will bring some. How much you pay?" I remarked that I must see them first and that concluded our interview.

* * * * *

Sleep is difficult to woo in the white nights, and I was not best pleased when, from a snatched slumber, I was awakened on the following morning by something which closely resembled being tickled in the ribs. My eyes gradually focussed the bland face of my friend Sobolof. It was half-past five only, my watch told me, and I cursed myself for not having locked my bedroom door. Sobolof remarked the weather was beautiful and that the hotel "dvornik" had told him I was sure to be up. I decided to forget that dvornik when it came to tips. However, since there was business afoot, better now and get it over. Sobolof helped me into my dressing

gown, commented upon my bedroom slippers, which he opined were in no measure the equal of those made by the Samoyedes, and after a hasty cup of coffee, which he kindly permitted me to swallow, we made a start.

It was well past noon when finally I persuaded this most accomplished of salesmen to leave me. His persistency would have conquered my resistance had I not recognised that to part with much coin of the realm for a large conch shell might legitimately be interpreted as a sign of well-developed imbecility. The ikons, he assured me, would be on view on the morrow: I sincerely hoped they would not. His suavity disarmed my every attempt to rid myself of him, and when I hoped I was working myself into a state of rage his demeanour overcame me and I had to laugh. I am sure it was only that he was feeling empty after his arduous labours which made him finally withdraw, and that not until he had inveigled out of me fifty kopeks for "expenses," a euphemism, of course, for the wherewithal to buy vodka.

* * * * *

Thence onwards he became my shadow, and on occasion, I must allow, my companion. From somewhere he produced the long-promised ikons,

gems all of them, but nothing ever taught him that a multiplicity of duplicates detracted somewhat from their value, and it was his custom to emphasise the sacred nature of the goods he was selling. In fact, his argument was that ikons merited as much financial consideration as they did religious veneration. Without doubt he was one of the pleasantest humbugs I have ever met and it did not take me many weeks to discover that his orthodoxy was as misty to him as the age of his grandmother, which is saying a deal. For was I not with all due ceremony introduced to that venerable dame?

It happened thus. Sobolof unbent so far as to ask me to come to his izba to drink a glass of tea, and I went. Unlike more sophisticated Westerners, he had made no preparation in the shape of special raiment, being clad only in a singlet and trousers, and I liked him the better for it. Outside in the street it was grilling and dusty, inside, what with lack of any ventilation and a wood stove in full blast, the atmosphere was —there is only one adjective—infernal. A large Samoyede dog with a reputation for biting, was hastily tied up by one among innumerable children, who to my bewildered brain seemed all

exactly alike. Sobolof explained that his married brother shared the house, hence the multiplicity of children. I occupied the only chair, for like tailors the Samoyedes prefer to sit crosslegged upon the ground. Leaning against the wall was the most antique specimen of femininity I had ever seen—the grandmother. She would have made a wonderful study for an artist. I asked Sobolof her age and with nonchalance he answered, "I do not know exactly, but perhaps a hundred and fifty." I expressed dubiety. After the manner of dealing with his ikons he replied, "Well, she must be very old, Barin," and with all the anxiety in his voice as when unwillingly lowering an impossible price, "Well, anyway, let us say a hundred and twenty-five." Again I demurred. "But she must be, Barin. There are those in Archangel, very, very old indeed, who always remember her as she is now, but still," with an air of giving something away at a knock-down price, "let us say a hundred." I daresay he was not far from the correct figure there, and I accepted it.

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The last time I saw Sobolof was prior to leaving Archangel by a tramp steamer for England,

after the outbreak of war. Samoyedes have no military obligations and so, in that respect, he had not been personally affected. But he struck me as thinner; his eyes had lost some of their sparkle; his smartness had become dimmed. For him the war was a sorry thing. Undoubtedly he missed his vodka and his appeals to the ikons, I noticed, had been discontinued. His business outlook, he confided to me, was gloomy; things were bad: the old lady was still alive and stronger than ever; more little Samoyedes had made their appearance in the Dom (house) Sobolof and food was not too plentiful. However, his inborn love of bargaining had not deserted him, and our wordy combats, if anything, increased in length.

I can still hear a high-pitched voice, intense with sorrowful supplication, which called to me as my tug took me slowly away from the muddy Archangel quay, "Barin, you can't mean it. Only three roubles for Saint Matthew, the great Saint Matthew! Very well then, throw the money!" I did so, and the great Saint Matthew was safely transferred to my charge.

My friend Sobolof should have been born in some western clime; a future would have awaited him!

A. L.

RUSSIAN TRAVELLING COMPANIONS

SEARCHERS after friendliness do not as a rule hope to discover it in an English railway carriage, nor do they usually part from their travelling companions with regret. Mrs. Smith looks austerely at Mrs. Brown over her novel, while Mr. Tompkinson pays no heed whatever to Mr. Jones, who returns the compliment. In Russia, however, it is different. Perhaps it is because of the long distances usually involved, when the occupants of a train assume the attitude of passengers on an ocean steamer, perhaps it is caused by the difference in temperament. Certain it is that one cannot travel far in Russia without making an acquaintance, possibly a friend, and the result is invariably amusing and sometimes delightful.

I fancy that the old lady who was hurled into our coupé some two years ago has revised her opinion of the Germans. We were *en route* from Kieff to Warsaw in a luxurious railway

carriage which had previously been on view at the Kieff Exhibition and which was fitted with conveniences to make an American millionaire green with envy. But, as the speed of the train increased, the motion became something appalling. We shook and jerked, we trembled and rolled. It grew impossible to sit on the well-upholstered seat without holding on with both hands and bracing our feet against the opposite wall. At that moment, as though shot out of a gun, appeared the old lady. "But it is dreadful," she cried. "We will leave the lines! Young man, you must do something!" Whereupon she subsided, breathless, into our armchair. She was a short, stout old lady, with many wraps which made her look shorter and stouter, but was possessed of an air which inspired one with a desire to do her bidding. The guard of the train rocked past in the corridor, trying to keep his balance in the upheaval. He was seized and questioned by us, and we made another acquaintance in the shape of a gorgeous officer, all blue and silver, who emerged from his coupé to join his expostulations to ours. The only result was that the guard told us that there *was* something wrong—which we knew before—that it

was confined to our particular carriage—as the old lady had already discovered—and that nothing could be done, but that nothing would happen. "Ah, we Russians!" sighed the old lady, as the guard staggered on, "we say nothing will happen and when it does happen we say that we don't know why it did happen." Which is the Russian character in a nutshell.

Then she and the officer established themselves as firmly as possible in our coupé, since bed and sleep were out of the question, and we all talked. "My maid," said the old lady, "is too ill from the motion to bother about anything; my little dog is ill also, and my cook is very nervous in the third-class. He came to tell me just now that he wishes to go home. But he can't go home! I am taking him to my villa at Nice, though what I shall do with him, since he speaks only Russian, only *le Bon Dieu* knows." She had plump little hands with which she gesticulated daintily. The blue and silver officer told us that he was on his way from the Caucasus to join the staff of the Governor-General at Warsaw, and then suggested a game of bridge. By now it was past midnight and the rolling and rocking continued. How we managed to play I cannot

tell. Certainly it was not scientific, except in the way we kept the cards from sliding to the floor, but it served admirably to pass the time. "This would never happen in Germany," said the old lady, making a dash for her trick. "Ah! those Germans, how orderly they are, how systematic! Do you know Berlin, my dear?" This to me. I admitted a slight knowledge and added that I preferred Russian disorder to German order. "The Germans are strict, I admit," she confessed, "but I really admire them. What is your opinion, Captain?" The blue and silver one replied definitely, "I can't endure them; they are not gentlemen," and snapped down the cards like so many decapitated Teutons.

It was three in the morning when the train came to a sudden stop. There was a small station, planted apparently on the edge of nothingness, a few shadowy forms flitted up and down the platform and a dim light showed. Here would be made an investigation of our carriage's erratic behaviour. We all scrambled out to help. The old lady's cook emerged from the distant third-class and proved the most useful of all, for he produced a minute electric torch and by its light our guard discovered that a missing

coupling pin had been the cause of all the trouble. We climbed back shivering, for the outside air was icy. "Good night, all," said the old lady. "I am now going to sleep, and if I am not awake when we reach Warsaw I wish you all *bonne chance.*" Often have I wondered what she now thinks of the "admirable Germans," and on what part of Russia's long front our blue and silver Captain is fighting the enemy he so cordially disliked, even in days of peace.

Two days, three, four, five days in a train! After such journeys it seems absurd to be asked by one's hostess if one is not "dreadfully tired" from the run from Paddington to Plymouth, and if one does not need to "rest before tea." Travelling is so comfortable when one has learned the knack and is in any way adaptable, and with good company, such as one always finds in Russia, the days are all too short. It was on a station platform of a town with such a long name that I almost hesitate to give it (Goroblagodatska, in the Urals) that we first saw two men with whom we were afterwards to spend many hours. Their appearance was not prepossessing. The taller of the two had a pair of bold dark eyes with which he scanned appraisingly everything

feminine within his range of vision, while he sang snatches of popular airs in a throaty tenor voice. His companion had allowed his fair locks to grow until they hung over his collar, and wore a white satin tie. Both were conspicuous for the shoddy smartness of their attire and contrasted unfavourably with the sturdy miners, in their belted blouses and high boots, who thronged the platform to watch the arrival of the train. We surveyed the pair with true British hostility, which seemed to slide off them like water from the proverbial duck's back, for the taller one only carolled more cheerily and the other gave us a friendly smile. The train for Ekaterinburg pulled in and stopped, and we scurried to find a coupé only to discover the objectionable couple hard on our heels. That they should dare to travel first-class was surprising, but that they should be audacious enough to offer us advice (humiliatingly good advice too !) was irritating to the last degree. We adopted the correct British attitude of ignoring the speakers and using their counsel, and soon settled down to what promised to be a dull six hours in a dismal coupé, inadequately lighted by one dim candle which guttered and spluttered far above our heads. Presently from the

neighbouring coupé, came the strains of a balalaika and a tenor voice singing "Springtime in the Forest." Could it be the two obnoxious ones? It was.

Five minutes later saw us a happy party of four, chatting away like old friends. "We are commercial travellers," said he of the bold eyes, "working for a French firm in mining machinery, but we find it very difficult to make any headway against the Germans." The balalaika player swept his hand over the strings of his instrument, creating a horrible discord. "They make me feel like that," he explained. "Ai, ai, they set my teeth on edge, these Niemtsi, with their cheap and nasty goods and their bullying ways." Then he burst into an absurd parody of "Deutschland über Alles," which made us all laugh. A loud thump on the partition startled us, and an angry voice demanded whether we were going to keep up that horrible row all night. The singer tiptoed to the door, peered round the corner, and came back chuckling. "It's a regular *Juden neste!* Five old patriarchs of the tribe of Israel, each with a rug over his knees, each wagging his grey beard, and all cackling like angry hens. What a terrible sight!" I suggested that we move

into our coupé and shut the door, so that the sounds of mirth and melody should not disturb the slumbers of Moses and Co., for none of us had any inclination to sleep. As a matter of fact we talked until four in the morning and I learned more about the German commercial invasion of Russia than any book could have taught me.

They were far from being bad fellows—these two commercial travellers—but a few visits to Paris had inspired them to attempt the grafting of the Boulevardier on the simple Russian stock, with disastrous, but wholly superficial, results. Once the veneer was rubbed off they were as sincere and as unaffected as the majority of their countrymen. It is to them that we owe our introduction to a certain hotel in Ekaterinburg —a hotel where the cooking is so sublime that the recollection of it will ever linger in our memory —and we shall always be grateful. At last we said farewell to them and left them to the thankless task of trying to underbid the crafty "Niemtsi" at the next mining town on their route. After the war, I devoutly trust, their difficulties will not be so great.

Such is travelling in Russia. One may go

from Petrograd to Vladivostock, from Odessa to Archangel, and always be sure of finding some kindred spirit or some entertaining companion on the journey. If only my fairy godmother would suddenly appear and offer me three wishes, I should say promptly, "Please, Godmother, all I ask is that you place me in a Russian railway train."

M. L.

GENERAL IVANOFF

OF all the Russian generals none has been more consistently successful nor gained more deservedly the confidence of his country than General Ivanoff. At the very outset of the war, upon his shoulders was laid the supreme command of the southern armies, and whether in the great advance across Galicia or in the equally skilful retreat therefrom, this hitherto unknown general has proved himself a veritable master-mind amongst soldiery. What Hindenburg, the brutal, has been to Germany I should say that Ivanoff, the kindly and gentle, has been to Russia. In the south the Russians are again taking the offensive under his direction; Lvoff is threatened, and many more unlikely things than the complete crumpling up of the Austro-German defensive in this region may happen. But with the military aspect of the situation I am not concerned. Rather am I concerned

with some fleeting visions of this general who is serving his country so well, and who is totally unknown to the great British public.

When I met him, some years ago, he was not to me a man of particular mark. My hostess at a dinner party in Kieff merely happened to say: "To-night you will meet 'our general'." But I noticed that she spoke in tones of warmest affection. At that time General Ivanoff was commanding the Kieff district, and, to be sure, I had heard it mooted that he was one of the coming men in the military world. A framed photograph of him in the Kreschatik had somewhat piqued my curiosity, since the man there depicted seemed to me, in my ignorance, not at all what the leader of legions should be. However, I was to meet him, and my interest increased. Our party that evening, I well recall, was a mixed one. With the exception of my hostess, a friend of hers (lady in waiting to the Empress), and myself, the guests were all officers. Since it was necessary for me to catch the midnight train to Warsaw I could not be in evening dress, and on that account felt somewhat embarrassed; while, moreover, I had visions of a dull evening, dull because

overshadowed by the presence of an exalted military personality. At that time I had not had the opportunity to learn that militarism, in the German sense, is non-existent in the Russian Empire, and that the relationship between officers and men, between generals and their subordinates, is not governed by the cut-and-dried brutal system of the Prussian, but much more nearly approaches the patriarchal. A door swung open and General Ivanoff was announced. One glance was sufficient to show me why my hostess had called him "our general." A tall man, with a slight stoop and a bushy grey beard, entered so quietly and with so little self-consciousness—I was going to say with so much modesty—that I felt instinctively that here was a man to be loved rather than feared, a man whose personality was compelling more on account of the tender side of his nature than because of that especial brusquerie which, even in England, we are inclined to associate with military genius. Apart from uniform and decorations he might well have been mistaken for some university professor whose radius of action was limited to the confines of a lecture hall and a library. In due course I was presented, and when I made

some stumbling apology for my bad Russian he smiled kindly, and said : " But, of course, you've got to speak our language when you are in our country, and that you try to do so, I assure you, we all accept as a compliment." It so happened that I was placed upon the general's right at dinner, and, incidentally, never once did he address me in anything but Russian. I heard afterwards that French and German are familiar to him, but that on principle he always uses the language of his country. A passionate patriot, whilst admiring foreign nations and appreciating the results of their enterprise, he is enthusiastically a Slav. I remember that once or twice during the meal I spoke in German, which, being more familiar to me, I thought would make my meaning clearer. On each occasion he checked me, and laughingly said : " No, tell it me in Russian ; I shall understand, and it is very much better for you."

Our dinner was an excellent one, and I think the general enjoyed it ; more particularly the fish, about which he waxed enthusiastic, affirming that the fish of the Russian rivers were, in themselves, a partially developed asset of enormous national importance. That thought

had often recurred to me. I have seen sterlet king of all fishes, sold for 25 kopecks each on the Northern Dvina, while huge commercial undertakings are framed to tin incomparably inferior salmon thousands of miles further from England! As I have already said, all this occurred in the piping times of peace, and the champagne circulated freely. But General Ivanoff, I noticed, drank it more as a gourmet than as a gourmand; with him it was clearly the approval of the epicure like his relish of the fish. In fact, I inferred that his whole attitude towards life, whether applied to things material or to things mental, was temperate. The impression he made upon me was that here was a man who, otherwise situated, would have made a wonderful criminal judge. He had great breadth of sympathy, a full recognition that life is not to be endured but rather enjoyed, vast tact, and that well-balanced control over subordinates, irrespective of rank, which demands none of the outward and irritating emblems of superiority, but rests upon the surer and firmer foundation of a serene confidence in the obedience and respect due to a high position. In Russia it appears to me that that motive power is more effective than all

the State-framed regulations emanating from Ministerial bureaux.

Time passed until suddenly I realised that I was in serious danger of missing my train. Kieff straggles; it is a city with probably the most precipitous hills I have ever encountered, and the drive to the railway station from the Institutskaia, where I was enjoying myself, was a matter of a good thirty minutes. I explained the situation to my hostess, and, apologising to the other guests, prepared to leave. "There is plenty of time," said the general, "plenty of time. If you will permit I will send you in my car, and you will be made comfortable on the train, for since you have not booked your coupé you will probably find an inconvenient crowd. Now let us have the stirrup cup!"

Fifteen minutes before midnight the general and my kindly host and hostess sauntered out —I can only use the word sauntered—to speed me on my way. Frankly, I was worried. With a crash and a jolt the car moved off. Kieff literally spun past. A peculiarly noisy hooter and a particularly penetrating siren warned the crowded thoroughfares that we were coming. Fearfully, I looked at my watch and my heart

sank. Five minutes! We roared along the streets. Thank Heaven, the station! I rushed in to buy my ticket, but the restraining hand of General Ivanoff's major-domo was laid upon my shoulder. "There is no need to hurry, Sudar. I have the general's instructions." And that night I travelled in a brand new *de luxe* by the General's command.

General Ivanoff is one of those extraordinarily capable and receptive men to whom the minutiæ of life are comparatively as important as its graver issues. That is why the humble mujik believes in him, why intellectual Russia trusts in him, and why the Austro-German forces operating in the south will be—to use a colloquialism—beaten to a frazzle.

A. L.

THE COSSACK

GLANCING recently through the pages of one of the most widely circulated books of reference, under the heading "Cossacks" I came across the following statement:—"Greatly execrated for their brutality." What is to be said of such comment? Happily the war is responsible for a fresh valuation of our time-honoured opinions, which were generally founded upon prejudice born of ignorance, and misconception such as the above will in due course, presumably, die a natural death. But since hardly a day passes that one does not see mention made of these troops, and since also a veil of mystery and romance surrounds them, it may be of interest to relate something of their history. The word "Kosak" is of Tartar origin, and in its primal significance was applied to those who had no visible means of subsistence, and who were literally "tramps."

This as early as the middle of the fifteenth century. With the break up of Tartar domination, squabbles became frequent between isolated bands of Tartars, who had no central authority to whom to appeal for assistance, and the frontiersmen of the actual Russian Empire, who, owing to the naturally unsettled state common to all non-permanent frontiers, were generally of that restless, adventurous type to whom England, for instance, owes many of her Colonies. This was the genesis of the Cossack movement, for it was a well-defined movement related in a very minor degree to any nationalistic spirit.

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The Cossacks of the Don, the earliest representatives of Cossackdom, were to be found in small communities about 1530, but at that time there was no thought of organisation; they were merely independent roving bands of chosen spirits, who were concerned chiefly with loot, and who very possibly would be fighting against the Tartars one day and assisting them against some common enemy the next. It was not until approximately 1560 that certain discontented Poles and Little Russians gathered together and settled in a lonely, uninhabited stretch of country

in the neighbourhood of the rapids of the Dnieper, not far from where the town of Ekaterinoslav stands to-day. These Cossacks took as a distinctive title the name of "Zaporozshki" (from the Russian za—beyond, and porog—a rapid), and it was this community which became famous in legend and history, both on account of the power it acquired and on account of its peculiar constitution.

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In 1570 Stephen Bathory, then ruler of Poland, fearing the rise of this organisation, himself attempted to utilise Cossack services, and formed a troop, which received regular pay on a liberal scale, and equipment, which doubtless he hoped would prove a counter-attraction to the Zaporozshki. The ultimate fate of this endeavour is not very clear, except in so far as it seems certain that a goodly few of those thus enlisted deserted, bag and baggage, at the first opportunity, and joined their friends down river. As can well be imagined, the fame of this freebooters' colony rapidly spread, and adventurous spirits from all over Europe quickly gave their adhesion to the movement, an adhesion, incidentally, which was always of an entirely voluntary character. Those

who were dissatisfied with what they found were under no compulsion to remain, and it says something for the internal administration that few ever left the "Setche," as the central and chief encampment was designated.

It must have been an uncommonly motley throng which gathered there. No credentials were required from those who threw in their lot. Criminals fleeing from justice, religious fanatics, adventurers, those irritated by the trammels of the State or of society, all were welcomed in this extraordinary melting pot. Germans, Russians, Tartars, Poles, Kalmucks, Khirgiz, certainly Scandinavians, probably Italians, I have never heard of any English, accepted without query the ordinances of this republic. For that is precisely what it was. There were thirty-eight divisions, called "Kourens"—the name given to Cossack huts to-day—and each of these divisions elected its own "Ataman," or chief. Above these ruled a Chief Ataman, likewise chosen by popular vote. Dissatisfaction with the one or the other was followed by deposition, and the Ataman became once more an ordinary Cossack and nothing else.

There were no written laws, but the unwritten word carried just as much weight, and amongst themselves these outlaws became eminently law-abiding. No woman was allowed in the Setche, and marriage was discouraged. However, there were married Cossacks, and these lived without the main settlement, busying themselves with farming and fishing, in which they were assisted by their wives. The fruit of their labours went into the common pool, and provided that commissariat which was necessary for their celibate brothers when they started forth on those forays in which the "Benedicts" were forbidden to participate. Murder was punished by death; the corpse of the victim was laid in a grave, and his assailant was then placed beside him and buried alive. Theft and debt were both punished by tying the criminal to a stake in a convenient place, where all and sundry might throw stones at him, beat him, or otherwise manifest their displeasure. If the proceeds of the theft were returned or the amount of the debt was paid, the prisoner was set at liberty.

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In many of their mannerisms the Cossacks were bizarre, and this was probably designed

with the specific purpose of terrifying their enemies. Thus it was their habit to shave their heads, leaving only one long wisp of hair, which would trail from the crown down to the nose. In Repin's famous painting of "Cossacks inditing a letter to the Sultan," this curious custom is plainly discernible, adding considerably to the mien of ferocity tinged with grim humour depicted upon the faces therein. In fact, there may have been some truth in the remark of the chronicler Eustaphieve (1813), who wrote: "They pride themselves upon everything opposite to civilisation and to the common feelings of man." Unfortunately, it must also be allowed that in their dealings with outside States their diplomacy was not unlike that of Bulgaria to-day—they went to the highest bidder. One day they were fighting for Poland, the next day for Russia, and on the third they would be in treaty with their much-hated enemy, the Sultan, or intriguing with the Khan of the Crimea, whom they despised. The year 1648 must be regarded as the zenith of their power, when, by popular vote, they passed under the protection of Russia. Thereafter the Zaporozshki were frequently a thorn in the sides of their chosen

masters. Such a community, enjoying a semi-independence, was bound to be a fertile breeding ground for conspiracy. Partially suppressed by Peter the Great, the rebellion of Pugacheff decided for Catherine II. her course of action, and in 1792 the Setche was once and for all dismantled, and the little republic ceased to exist.

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Catherine, however, was wise in her generation, and offered to its survivors lands on the eastern shores of the Sea of Azoff, watered by the River Kuban. The famous Kuban Cossacks of to-day are their descendants. Of the other Cossack communities, those of the Amur, Ural, Akmolinsk, etc., their history, while possessing no such concrete narrative, has ever been bound up with Russian expansion. Dwelling upon the confines of the empire, peopling the loneliest and remotest steppes, they have by evolution become a people apart, the hardiest and most resourceful of soldiers as the Germans have every reason to know, and the most loyal supporters of their country and of their Czar. Maybe in times of popular unrest, during strikes and other disorders, they have not distinguished themselves by their gentleness as much as by

their efficacy in handling crowds! But it is manifestly unfair to judge them by that standard. Speaking from personal experience, I have found them simple, hospitable, kindly and, above all, helpful to the stranger within their gates. Can one expect more?

A. L.

THE STEPPE

I HAVE often been asked what scenery in the Russian Empire has most impressed me, and I have always promptly answered "the Siberian steppe." And then my questioner has looked at me curiously, and has remarked: "Really! What can you find of appeal in a great, flat, barren plain?" Argument under the circumstances is useless; but I venture to say that once seen by any but the most materially minded, the steppe remains in the memory for all time as a recollection haunting alike for its vastness, its mystery, its beauty, and its silence. Anyone with imagination finds half the pleasure in a long walk on a summer's day in the "beyond." The sun is shining, the sky is clear, and Nature is rejoicing. A sufficiency of money for all possible needs jingles in one's pocket, and so, if one covers ten miles or twenty—what matter; at the journey's end one

is certain of any modest requirements being satisfied. Blithely one tops a hill, and, from the crest, espies in the blue haze across the valley another tree-clad range, the summit of which one is immediately filled with a desire to conquer. Why? To see what is beyond. It is the fascination of the unknown, of possibly wondrous views with, maybe, a glimpse of the sea in the background, of possibly only more rolling downs or copse-studded farms. And when the desire has been satisfied, even though the sun may be sinking and the shadows lengthening, there is still a tinge of regret at the inability to penetrate still further into that wonderful, mystic land of romance—the "beyond." It is this which makes of walking a delight, and which in minor fashion tends to lend something more than pure materialism to the tourist in a motor.

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Now it is this sense, multiplied many hundreds of times, which makes of the steppe, seen under any conditions, something amazing and awe inspiring, something which grips the heart and forces upon one the realisation of the littleness of passing events. I made my first acquaintance with it in mid-winter. Previously, from a railway

carriage window, I had only been conscious of an unrelieved monotony of white, which effectually obscured the borderland of earth and sky. But thanks to a friend I was to taste of its reality. "Wrap up well and we will sleigh to Bekishovskoe to-day," this being a village some thirty versts from Omsk. "They always say," he added laughingly, "that between there and the North Pole there are no more trees." I can quite credit it. When we started the air was almost unnaturally clear, but there was a biting wind from the north, through which our troika raced to its destination. There, there were a few snow-hidden huts, a tiny, forlorn-looking, green-domed church, and, happily, a steaming samovar in the posthouse, for this was the highway to Tobolsk and the beyond. That was just it. As I stood and gazed over the wintry silence I waved my hand vaguely and asked, "But beyond, what is there beyond?" My friend, who was not endowed with imagination, replied, "How do you mean 'beyond'? I suppose if you kept going for another 2000 miles you might hit Obdorsk—the loneliest place in the world, people say." The trees were duly pointed out to me—three gaunt, scarred pines,

which seemed to be battling for existence amidst their grim surroundings, and my mind wandered back to the immensity conveyed by the idea of 2000 miles, by the unrelieved loneliness of this great, silent land, and a fierce longing came over me to go on, and on, and on, into the beckoning beyond.

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But that is only one aspect of the steppe. It has others, and more friendly ones. In the spring, that wonderful season in Siberia when the snow vanishes as though by the wave of some magician's wand, and when the whole world bursts into flower, the steppe becomes a garden. Nowhere have I ever seen such wonderful variety, such fragrance, such colour, or such wild confusion of dear old-fashioned blooms which might well have been transplanted from a Devonshire lane. There are tangled masses of wild roses, the yellowest of marsh mallows, forget-me-nots, foxgloves, huge maroon-coloured thistles, sedate oxeyes and bluebells in clusters which stain the steppe a darker hue than the sky above. Here, indeed, lies invitation to wander, and as one tramps on and on, inhaling with delight the scent of the flowers, one feels verily the

promise of spring and the call of the wide-bosomed steppe.

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And then there comes to me another memory. A hot August sun, the slightest of breezes, gently stirring the almost tropical atmosphere, and laughing, brawny Cossack women gathering the sheaves—for it is harvest time. Good-humour everywhere, contentment, and drowsy surmise as to a strange rumour. For a traveller has passed through this Irtish village, remote alike from telegraph and railway, and has spread the news that Mother Russia is about to call upon her Cossack sons to defend her once more. An ancient worthy, who saw service with his beloved Skóbeleff at bloody Plevna, and who accompanied Rennenkampf through the Japanese war, opines that it is only talk. "Pushtiaki" (rubbish) epitomises his opinions. But if it is true he intends to line up with the others. With true Cossack spirit he maintains that he can still handle a rifle—what more is needed? What, indeed! But to talk of war, nay, even to think of it, when all the world is bathed in the glory of a steppe sunset—those sunsets which seem to point the road to Paradise—of course, it is

"Pushtiaki." And putting all thought for the morrow behind them the women, with one accord, break into a folk song, an elusive melody transmitted from father to son and from mother to daughter, and at once the admiration and irritation of the outsider, who longs to be able to transcribe and retain it. There are many such songs of the great steppe; perhaps some day an enterprising musician from the West will journey thither and collect these gems of temperament expressed in melody.

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I wandered back to the river as the day darkened. Siberia is primitive and a Cossack accompanied me to hail from a boat the passing steamer, which once a day troubled the waters of this great stream and which picked up chance passengers, for all the world like a London omnibus. In due course the steamer came, and with a stroke or two of the oars I was alongside. A few moments later I was in my sleeping cabin; electric light, running water, a spring mattress, all the comforts of Western civilisation. None the less my soul was uneasy. I leaned over the rail of the vessel and the steppe called me. I yearned to be back with her, and the

sorrow of parting lay upon my heart. Next morning, as I gazed over the familiar expanse, I saw a single Cossack gallop along with a red flag.

Then I knew it was War!

A. L.

MY RUSSIAN HOUSEHOLD

THERE are certain things which are always engraved upon one's memory. The recollection of my first visit to the dentist is equally as vivid as my first ball, and I class, as midway between the two in thrills, painful and pleasant, my first attempt at housekeeping in Russia.

Institutskaia 16 was an enormously high building for Kieff. Had it stood at the top of the steep street instead of nestling modestly at the bottom, it would have made an imposing landmark with its seven storeys of grey stucco crowned with a green roof. As it was, it instantly attracted the eye of the newcomer, while Kievans dubiously shook their heads over its stability. 'Nothing of that height, they averred, could possibly be safe, and when I spoke of having seen houses of forty, and even fifty, storeys in New York, they looked politely incredulous and changed the subject. Therefore, from their standpoint, I was fortunate

in having a flat on the ground floor, so that, when the whole building tumbled into the street as it undoubtedly would, I should not have far to fall. My windows looked out on the green slopes and shady horse-chestnut trees belonging to a large girls' school across the way, and also afforded a vision of Miska, the isvostchik, who had constituted himself my exclusive property ever since I had first been weak enough to succumb to his charms. Miska was very small, and his horse—a grey trotter—was very large. It was with enormous difficulty that Miska was ever able to pull him up, and I was usually landed half a mile or so beyond my destination. But that was of small moment. Was not "Sinitza" (Titmouse)—a singularly inappropriate name for the great, grey monster—the fastest horse in Kieff, and could not Miska challenge any driver in the Krestchatik to a race, and win? The fact that the "Angliskaya Barinya," seated in a swaying cab which closely resembled a small sitz-bath, was praying him to stop in four languages at once, merely added to the joy. He would turn half round on the box, his padded coat making him look like a tub, and cry, "Look, Barinya! That boastful D'mitri, with his black Lastotchka (Swallow),

has given up. My beautiful Sinitza is the king of the road!" "Miska," I would say sternly on descending, "this must stop. I shall never take you again." Then his snub nose would pucker with the incredulous grin which wreathed his face, as he would reply, "Ah, Barinya, you are too kind to little Miska to do a thing like that." And, sure enough, there he would be outside my window the next morning, just at the time he knew I should make my appearance at the door.

If Miska had no fear of my lasting wrath, Dunia was equally courageous. Dunia was my cook. She was as round as a ball, as wrinkled as an old glove, and as expert with her wood fire and mysterious earthenware pots as many a haughty chef. On her head she wore a peculiar structure, rather like a fez swathed in folds of linen. I never saw her without it, and am inclined to think it served at night as well as day. She was never idle. Hour after hour she would sit on a stool cutting, mixing, and beating the countless ingredients which go to make Russian cooking a thing of delight to the eye as well as to the palate. That Dunia was very firm—in moments of irritation I called it the obstinacy of a mule—I was soon to learn. Each morning I would invade her

kingdom with a bulky book of recipes under my arm, and the following dialogue would ensue: "Good morning, Dunia." "Good morning, Barinya." "Dunia, I think that to-night we will have a spinach soup with those little pirozki of pastry I like so much. The fish I leave to you, and afterwards I want shashlik and a cauliflower and purée of beetroot, and whatever sweet you care to make." Dunia would seize her fez-turban with both fat hands and press it firmly on to her head. This was always a sign of opposition. "Does the Barinya really want spinach soup and shashlik? In this warm weather a little cold sucking pig in aspic to begin with, and then iced soup and then chicken Kavkaski with French beans, and an ice to follow." It was no use to argue: Dunia had made up her mind and persistence merely brought forth the solemn assurance that no spinach was to be had, that the mutton was tough, and that cauliflowers were out of season. It only remained for the vanquished one to put a good face on it and consent. Nevertheless Dunia enjoyed our morning meetings and her round face grew sad if, by any chance, I had no suggestions to make which she could skilfully oppose.

The remainder of my permanent "staff" was composed of Domna. She was as young and slim as Dunia was old and stout. In the mornings she walked cat-like over the polished floors with bare feet, her yellow hair swinging in a braid on her shoulder. By luncheon-time, however, her hair was coiled in a neat knot, while beneath her rustling white apron gleamed the latest Polish-American monstrosities in the shape of shoes with bulging toes and perilously high heels. Domna was a country girl, and it would have taken a far harder heart than mine to subdue her naïve enthusiasm. "Ay, ay!" she would exclaim, on seeing me dressed for an evening party, "How magnificent you are, Margarita Karlovna! What a beautiful blue gown! And blue slippers also! How I wish my mother could see you." She would reverently touch a fold of my skirt with one finger and then stand back, with hands clasped, to get the full effect. It was embarrassing, but complimentary. Her admiration was entirely genuine. Far from looking upon us as her employers—people who paid her for whatever amount of service she saw fit to give—we were her father and mother, for much of the feeling of the old serfs was ingrained in Domna, and she

chatted to us or to our visitors with the same childish freedom which marked the favoured "souls" in the days before 1860. She was a most engaging maiden, and so, it was evident, thought Ivan the dvornik.

Our Ivan must have come of a long line of dvorniks, he had so absolutely the correct manner. His carefully tended brown beard and moustache partially concealed a firm mouth, which rarely broadened in a smile. His eyes, bright and brown, saw everything, even when he was tipped back in his chair reading the *Kievlanin*. He was always courteous, always informative about trains, boats, and country excursions, but I felt that one could never take a liberty with Ivan. Domna, however, did not share my awe. I often heard his laughter from the direction of the kitchen and, if I was quick enough, I could usually see him, rather flushed, retreating hastily to the main hall. One day Domna rushed into my sitting-room, her face distorted with grief, and flung herself at my feet in an attitude of supplication. "Oh, Margarita Karlovna, may I have a dog?" she sobbed. It was such an unusual request and preferred in such an unusual manner that I was speechless. Domna sobbed out her story. It was Ivan's dog's puppy

and Ivan was going to kill it, so she had slapped his face and taken the puppy into the kitchen, feeling sure that I should not object to the new tenant until Dunia had assured her that I most certainly would. Hence the grief and the attitude. I decided to see the cause of this upheaval and we adjourned to the kitchen. Without doubt it was the ugliest puppy which had ever seen the light of day, and that it could do only imperfectly, for it had but one eye. The other eye was pink rimmed and its tail was long and snaky, while its feet indicated that it would grow to the size of a calf. Its coat was muddy brown, with a few white spots which gave it a moth-eaten look, but its amiability was extraordinary and even Dunia surveyed it with sheepish affection. After that, Domna and her "Kniaz" (Prince) were inseparable, and Ivan's voice was not heard at the kitchen door for days. I fancy he could forgive everything but that slap in the face.

The only person who did not fall a victim to the charms of Kniaz was Anastasia Phillipovna Yablonska, the laundress. This was due to the fact that Kniaz enjoyed beyond all things swinging on her short woollen skirt as she bent over the washtubs. But Anastasia was a very holy

woman, so she did not say "Chort!" as Dunia did when he bit her ankles, but she blamed him for every broken button and every torn ruffle. Anastasia was far older than the cook, and should have worn spectacles, but she considered that if the good God saw fit to take away her eyesight it was impious to remedy the matter. The result was rather disastrous for her employers, but that affected her not one jot. Also, we all knew that if we gave her no more work she would resign herself to starvation with the same placidity with which she scorched our best table-linen, so we were all obliged to suffer her holiness with what composure we could muster. Anastasia only troubled me with her sacred presence two days in the week, so I never considered her one of the household, any more than Anton who lighted the fires in the porcelain stoves, or the two youths whose names I never knew, who appeared each Tuesday for a few hours. Their sole mission in life was to polish floors, and this they did with their bare feet thrust through the straps of brushes, sliding and slipping about until the boards shone like glass.

We were all very happy, in spite of occasional misfortunes—such as the time when Kniaz shot under the feet of the apoplectic gentleman who

occupied the position of chief censor, and sent him into the street in an unexpected position. And in the middle of our happiness came the telegram which called us home to England. I shall always remember the night of our departure. Ivan's brother and understudy loaded our luggage upon Miska's cab, and crowned it with his own stout person in spite of Miska's protestations; Domna and Dunia, weeping, called down upon us the blessings of St. Nicholas, St. Christopher, and St. Alexander, while Kniaz chased his own tail and was in the way of every one. For ourselves a two-horse cab was waiting, and we dashed along the streets of Kieff a little saddened, greatly touched by our farewells and yet looking forward to the sight of England. We passed Miska and his burden and caught snatches of his wordy argument with his stolid companion about overweight luggage. His was the last friendly face we were to see, and he gazed from us to the substantial tip in his grimy paw and cried with real sincerity, "Come back soon to Kieff! Miska will be waiting." Good lad! I trust that by now he is Sergeant Miska, with the cross of St. George above his faithful heart.

M. L.

RUSSIA IN TRAVAIL*

FOR the past fortnight the world has been absorbed in the spectacular German advance into Russian territory. In its varied aspects it has been dramatic and, undoubtedly to the popular mind, ominous. Giant fortresses have been pulverised by monster guns, human life has been squandered on a scale never before dreamed of, and the Kaiser, thus far, has seen the apparent triumph of his long-organised preparations. As a result, the evacuation of Petrograd has already been discussed as a possible measure in the Russian Press. A remote probability, this, owing to the swampy character of the country surrounding the capital and its consequent unfitness for military operations, and owing, also, to the approach of the dreaded winter. But none the less the possibility exists, and hence merits consideration.

Supposing Petrograd were evacuated, supposing

* Written August 28, 1915.

the Russians were forced to retire towards their central provinces—what then? Let there be no delusion! Upon the resolution of the Russians to fight to a successful finish it would not have the slightest effect. In fact, it would only serve to consolidate more firmly the aspirations of the Russian people for a truly national capital, either Moscow or some other suitable centre, which would become the administrative heart of the Empire. This point requires emphasis, since it is habitually overlooked that at no time has Petrograd been regarded as the emblem of true Slavdom, but has rather served to indicate the foreign virus which for so long has permeated the veins of the Russian nation.

The grey and misty dawn of Russian history, the birth of Orthodoxy and age-long legend, have implanted a reverence for Kieff, the mother-city of Russia, in the heart of the people. Its greatness passed, and the natural geographical centre of eighteenth-century Russia—Moscow—took its place. Moscow is hallowed by the memory of great rulers: Ivan the Great, law-giver and consolidator, the victor over the Horde in 1480; Vassili, the so-called apostle of the Russian renaissance; Ivan the Terrible, who, in spite of

his faults, was Slav to the backbone; and Féodor, who established the Patriarchate and thus founded a National Church in the widest sense of the term. These were the men who created out of chaos a composite, virile entity, that Russia which was to be so roughly handled by Peter the Great.

Whatever may be written by the historian, Peter was no respecter of tradition. On the contrary, he despised it, and proved himself incapable of estimating the value of nationalism—a variant of patriotism—as an asset in the construction of the immense fabric upon which he had set his mind. Impulsive by nature, he could not leave the garnering of the harvest, for which he had toiled, to other gleaners. He scattered broadcast, upon ill-prepared soil, new ideas, foreign customs, and modern thought. That the seed never penetrated the crust of national prejudice mattered not one whit to him. Had his policy been more constrained and statesmanlike, the leaven of Western progress might have been absorbed by the masses and the whole subsequent course of Russian history might have been changed. Coercion applied to a nation cannot succeed, and therein lay the secret of Peter's failure. Thwarted

in his desires, not unnaturally he turned abroad for consolation, to those who would sympathise with his aspirations. Thereafter his policy was towards the glory of the Russia of his own creation rather than towards the glory of the Russia mirrored in the wishes and temperaments of its peoples. In other words, Peter was an egoist. He was blind to the great qualities of his subjects and deliberately embarked upon grandiose schemes which found no response in the sentiment of the nation.

Of this characteristic Petrograd remains a monument. Its very situation is an anachronism. It is no exaggeration to state that not 20 per cent. of the people ever see it in their lifetime. Imagine the capital of Great Britain at Penzance; the simile is certainly not overdrawn. So much, then, for the geographical unsuitability of Petrograd. And, in addition, propinquity to Germany, the steady and subtle infusion of the Teutonic element into the governmental, commercial, and professional branches of the Russian body politic, had robbed the Petersburg of the last century of its national colour. Were a foreigner to be suddenly deposited there, a foreigner of travelled experience, he would be hard put to say in what

country he was were it not for the domes of the churches. Here is no national city. Here is no emblem of national expression. Here is no cradle of a race. Here is merely a collection of brick, stone, and wooden buildings; a cosmopolitan agglomeration of peoples drawn together by curiosity, business, or governmental service; a mélange of languages and nationalities—German predominating—but possessing no distinctive features.

There are palaces, museums, picture galleries. There is extravagance, magnificence, luxury run riot. There are opera-houses, theatres, cafés chantants, public gardens, electric trams, vast hotels—the vastest, incidentally, German—river steamers, telephones, and all the concomitants of the latest civilisation. But, with the exception of the churches and of the Alexander Nevsky monastery, and excepting the new Tartar mosque—a dream of exquisite beauty—there is nothing to show the traveller that this is the throbbing, pulsating heart of the great Russian Empire. From buildings to individuals—in the Nevsky, true, one sees Russian uniforms, but if one listens one will hear German, French, English, Italian, and only occasionally Russian, spoken.

Here is an incomprehensible paradox: the capital of a country whose people possess perhaps the most strongly marked characteristics in the world has been completely denationalised and, to a great extent, Teutonised. In the history of man there has never been another case of an immense nation, nominally independent, becoming so completely subservient to an alien Power. Therein lies the true inwardness of the present conflict. France is fighting for her honour, Belgium for her freedom, Great Britain for the sacredness of treaties, and Russia for the realisation of her most precious aspirations, her complete independence from exterior tutelage, and her development along lines Slav in character, Slav in sentiment, and Slav in mentality. Thus the evacuation of Petrograd would spell little. The Government, the working parts of the great machine which controls Russian destinies, would be withdrawn to Moscow or perhaps to Nijni Novgorod, there to await events with that sincere trust in the God of Justice which is manifested in the calm determination and close union of all classes.

And already in these dark days, when Germany is drunk with apparent success, there is visible

an undercurrent of vague fear as to what the future may bring to her hordes on the Russian plains. Space and infinity are ever awesome : to find the beyond always the beyond, never to arrive at the end of the day's journey, to discover the prize ever just beyond reach, to march with all the splendour and panoply of war into burnt-out villages, empty hamlets, and devastated towns—human nature rebels against the reiteration of such sinister visions, and the leagues behind seem to speak incessantly of suffering, hunger, cold, and trial to come. As for having accomplished anything weightier than the occupation of so many versts of absolutely barren country, what else has been gained ? Without intention the enemy is forging a weapon which shall smite it hip and thigh. Without intention, it is giving back to Russia that vivid sense of nationality which, since the days of Peter the Great, has been nearly obsolescent. It is not a heterogeneous mob of alien races with conflicting aspirations which faces Germany. It is not a half-hearted soldiery, uninterested in aught but the chances of gain, but a great nation which, after nearly two and a half centuries of practical bondage, is fighting for its resurrection, for the re-birth of its

right to lead its own life, for the extinction of alien interference, for the right to voice the wishes of its subjects, and the freedom to cling to such relics of the past as it may wish. In a word, here is a nation which is coming into its own as an influence specifically of itself and formed intrinsically after the manner of its traditions as a race apart.

The extinction of Petrograd as capital, which may conceivably be looked for after this war, would add enormously to that semi-dormant veneration for the country and its history which hitherto has lacked coherent expression. For long enough Russia has been the pupil of Western Europe. She has outgrown that phase, and in the full enjoyment of her majority may worthily play hostess to her guests from other lands. Wars of aggression have been foreign to her. She has only fought when forced by imperative necessity or by the alien-bred ambition of her bureaucracy. Her dreams are rather of the spiritual, of the betterment of her poor, of the development of her own. Russia in herself is invincible, and the temporary occupation of her frontier provinces means nothing. And the magnitude of her sufferings will to some extent be assuaged by the

greatness of the boon she will receive. Unwittingly, Germany has been the creator of a new Russia, of a united people bound together as never before by the tie of blood, by the purity of its aims, and by the memory of its past slavery.

A. L.

SKOBELEFF

OF all national heroes it is probable that none has ever been more cherished by an entire people than is the memory of Skóbeleff by the Russians. And, if possible, time has only emphasised this worship ; to-day the thoughts of millions turn to him, and from different quarters it has been reported that his phantom, mounted on his famous white charger, has been seen leading his beloved soldiers. Now the life of Skóbeleff possesses certain interesting features, not the least being that he was an apostle of pan-Slavism and mirrored the sentiments of the great masses so faithfully that it is no wonder he became the emblem of Russia's aspirations.

First, however, it will be interesting to sketch the life of this remarkable man. By birth he possessed no advantages. His grandfather had been a simple private who worked his way to commissioned rank. His father, also a soldier,

obtained advance through sheer capacity, and Skóbeleff in his later days was wont to state: "Family never made great men." In talking to his troops he often used to say, "What my grandfather did, you can do." His military career was varied; it embraced Khiva, Turkestan, and the Russo-Turkish war, but only in the campaign of Geok Tépe against the Tekkes did he have absolutely independent command. I mention this because generally a national hero has been the victor of some epoch-making triumph which stands to his credit as long as history shall survive. With Skóbeleff this was not the case. Prior to 1877 he distinguished himself in Central Asia by his personal courage, by his powers of organisation, and by a certain swiftness of decision in minor matters. He was, in fact, an officer of promise only. Then came the war against Turkey. At first he was employed merely as a staff officer, later he was given command of a division, and it was then that he made Russia ring for ever with his name, chiefly in the handling of his troops during the unsuccessful assaults on Plevna. His victory in the Geok Tépe campaign in 1881, a brilliant feat of arms, has not clung to the national memory as has his conduct during those bad days

in 1877. In fact, he was adopted as the country's idol in the very bitterest moments of defeat.

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Therein, to my mind, is something symbolic. It is common knowledge how Plevna ultimately fell, how the Russians drove the Turks back to the gates of Constantinople, and how, at a sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of lives, Bulgaria was freed. But Skóbeleff was the creation of those dark hours which preceded the dawn. Now, what was responsible for this curious development of popular devotion for an officer who, while a great leader of men, had been responsible for no outstanding victory? I am inclined to think that its genesis was the spontaneous realisation that Skóbeleff was the purest embodiment of all Slav characteristics carried to their fullest development. As a soldier he was adored for his desperate bravery; as a leader he was trusted as one who never demanded from others something he would not do himself; as an officer he inspired confidence on account of his great justice tempered with the most stringent discipline; as a man he was loved for his ever manifest sympathy for those in trouble. Moreover, he understood the Slav character, which is in some degree so intricate that it is a

riddle to many even of those who are Slav by birth.

But withal, he was conscious of something intangible and undeveloped in his own country, which was not waiting for assistance from outside, but needed quickening from within—the encouragement of recognition from its leaders. Foreign influence, he realised, should be kept subservient to national ideals; it was to be an accessory on occasion, but was not to govern. He believed in the promise of this inner consciousness of Slavdom; he believed that the unwritten, unvoiced sentiments of his soldiery, the dreams of the humble moujiks, translated by those with mental equipment and the necessary sympathy to comprehend, would materialise into a nation with definite characteristics, definite aims, and definite aspirations as opposed to a disunited, indefinite agglomeration of warring opinions, wherein might be ever discerned the sinister shadow of foreign guidance.

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Thus Skóbeleff became more than a man, more than a hero; he became enshrouded with a mysterious glamour which will endure as long as Russia exists. Mme. Novikoff relates an incident

which well exemplifies this. One of his soldiers coming unexpectedly upon the throng which blocked the street opposite the *chapelle ardente* where Skóbeleff lay dead asked, "Why this crowd?" and received answer, "Skóbeleff is dead." "Nonsense!" replied the honest veteran, "Skóbeleff's not dead, he would not consent to die. It is impossible." And so, unconcernedly, he passed on his way. In his knowledge of the fundamental traits underlying human nature, Skóbeleff was a genius. In West Africa I met an officer who, though living in the midst of a fever-stricken solitude, always dressed for dinner with extreme care and lapsed into none of that slovenliness which is usual and indeed understandable in the bush. I commented upon it, and he replied simply that it helped him to remember the position he occupied and was a tonic to his self-respect. Skóbeleff went further, and always dressed in his best on going into action, since he declared that he might be called upon to face his Creator, and his finest uniform was merely a sign of respect. Troops under his command invariably followed his example, and the gain in *esprit de corps* was surprising.

He was a great believer in music as a stimulant

to martial ardour. Out of his own purse would he provide regimental bands for his men, and he took care to see that there were reserve players for individual instruments, and, for that matter, reserve instruments also! He was as critical about the polish of a trombone as about the cleaning of a rifle—both had to be perfect. Skóbeleff grasped the significance of the appeal to emotion and made use of it. Nothing was too trivial to escape his notice. If a regiment was nervous under fire he would chat with the officers, chaff the men, and restore confidence.

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Apart from regimental rank, he was the truest democrat; he encouraged his soldiers to come to him in person and relate their woes; the poor amongst his officers blessed the day they joined his division. As an instance of his unostentatious kindliness and consideration, the following story is worth relating. After the fall of Plevna he met in Bukarest an officer who looked hungry and wan. "Have you dined?" he asked the unknown. "No, sir," was the reply; "the fact is, this town is very expensive, and I was trying to find a cheap restaurant." "Come along with me," said Skóbeleff, gaily, "you're my guest to-night."

They dined together at the best hotel, and the junior forgot differences of rank, and thoroughly enjoyed his meal with his genial host. After making his adieux, the General suddenly called him back, and, patting his shoulder kindly, said, "I am afraid you are a careless fellow with your money. Look! you've dropped a hundred rubles on the floor," and hurried away. Only later did the officer realise that his entertainer had been Skóbeleff!

His adversaries were among his greatest admirers. After the conclusion of the Turkish war, for a twelvemonth he remained in command of the army of occupation in Southern Bulgaria; and the greatest confidence was manifested by the Turks in "Ak Pasha"—the Just Pasha—whilst with the Bulgarians he was as a god. It was his genius which first framed the modern Bulgarian army. Personally, he drilled and instructed their Militia, and imbued their ranks with something of that same spirit which had inspired his own men. To-day the soul of Skóbeleff must be restless. Russia remembers him, thinks of him, turns to him. Does Bulgaria?

A. L.

THE IKON

I ALWAYS think that the Russian ikon fitly represents the mystery enshrouding that country. There is a curious appeal in those formally, one might almost say mathematically, expressed delineations of the Saviour, the Blessed Virgin, and the Saints, which is capable of gripping at the heart-strings of the moujik, as well as fascinating the stranger from the West. Like so many things Slav—creed, customs, and even society—the ikon remains very much what it was in those far-off days when monastic pioneers were unintentionally extending the Russian frontiers in their search after seclusion.

The part played by the ikon in the daily life of the people is well known, and scarcely needs mention. But it may be stated briefly that every room of a Russian house contains one hanging in the corner, and this applies not only to private establishments, but also to public buildings, railway stations, theatre foyers, steamers, barracks,

prisons, in fact the custom is universal. An ikon greets the eye of the new-born baby, and it watches the passing of the soul from the body. It is reverenced by all alike. A beggar in filthy rags will salute it with a devout kiss, and the general covered with decorations will not regard it as beneath his dignity to pay the same homage, following in the footsteps of his unfortunate brother with becoming humility. The great lady will kneel in silent prayer before some gem-encrusted ikon, the eyes of which rest kindly, almost tenderly, upon her neighbour, a poor woman from the slums. Wönderfully democratic is the Russian Church!

Prince and peasant, rich and poor, all have the same right of approach to the miraculous and most venerated of these emblematic creations which are housed in magnificent churches. But the same devotion is shown to humbler ikons in humbler churches, to those erected in the streets, which are invariably reverenced by the hurrying throngs, even to those which partake of the nature of the household chattel. On entering a room the Orthodox invariably bows to the mystic picture, makes a sign of the cross, and then only greets his friend.

There is no counterpart to it in any other religion. The rosary or crucifix of the Roman Catholic is individual in its spiritual value; there is no emblem of Catholicism which is so ever-present, or which is vested with such a miraculous character. And therein lies the subtle fascination which I have mentioned. There is a tinge of the supernatural about the ikon which holds the imagination and provides an essential requisite for the Russian temperament. Probably, to the hard-headed Westerner, this veneration only savours of crude superstition. But equally, to that individual, half the beauties and wonders of life are hidden.

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Personally, I like to think of tough old Kutuzoff praying to Our Lady of Kazan just before leaving for the battle of Borodino. I like to dream of the butcher Minin and the boyar Pojarski, brothers-in-arms, who also invoked her aid to free Moscow from the Polish yoke in 1612. Peter the Great, in spite of his disdain of all things truly Russian, was not ashamed to travel ever with an ikon of the Mother of God, and actually ascribed the victory of Poltava (so some writers assert) to Her assistance. Yet again, Alexander I. carried with him a famous

ikon studded with diamonds in his campaign against Napoleon, the same which to-day hangs in the monastery of St. Michael at Kieff, an object of national veneration. And so the list might be extended. To the Slav mind there is nothing strange in the possession by certain ikons of supernatural powers.

Their origin—that is to say, the origin of the great historical ikons—is usually unknown. Some have been painted by saints, some have been simply "discovered," some have gained their reputation during famines, epidemics, or wars. As I write, I have before me an index of the ikons representing the Virgin to which is attached miraculous power. They number over 400, and are chiefly in the possession of towns and villages from which they take their names. Some are of great antiquity, one dating back to 1071, another to 856, and a third to 304, though the chronicler concerning the latter is careful to state that the year is only approximate. But it is interesting to note, and, indeed, is more characteristic, that there is a fair sprinkling of ikons with modern reputations, one dating as late as 1888. It is from these originals that the many millions of replicas are made, those replicas which do

daily duty, so to speak, for the masses. Of the cheaper varieties the majority are made by the peasants, though in Moscow their fashioning has become a regularly recognised industry. The more ornate are still painted in the monasteries as of yore, and there anything in the nature of artistic impulse tending to break away from the ancient form is strongly discouraged. In the sixteenth century, when civilian labour was first applied to ikon painting, those thus employed had to be known as of sound moral character, the ecclesiastical authorities satisfying themselves upon this point.

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The schism which rent the Orthodox Church owing to the Niconic reforms had also its particular effect upon ikons. The Old Believers, those who protested against the innovations then introduced, owing to persecution, made their way in large numbers to the northern governments of Russia. There the clergy as a whole were against Nikon, the island monastery of Solovetz, in the White Sea, serving as the focal point of this disaffection. Now these dissenters, refusing to recognise any ecclesiastical changes, likewise disclaimed the possible sanctity of any

ikons painted subsequent to that date. Hence, those they brought with them when they fled acquired a very special value, and were handed from father to son. Solovetz later saw the error of its ways, and the Old Believers in those districts have rapidly decreased, though it is still their stronghold. But this fact explains why at the present time the provinces of Archangel and Olonetz are comparatively rich in rare specimens of iconic art, which may on occasion be exchanged for money. Ikons are never sold !

As far as workmanship is concerned, this is often exquisite. I must point out that the ikon is not necessarily a painted picture ; it frequently takes the form of a diptych or triptych of enamelled brass, the panels containing, besides the principal figure of the Saviour or of the Virgin, scenes from the New Testament or minute replicas of the famous miraculous ikons, such as those named after the towns of Kazan or Smolensk. On account of the penal legislation affecting the Old Believers, which was often ruthless, the ikons carried into their exile were usually those which, owing to their small size, were inconspicuous and could easily be secreted on the person. This very

restriction of space necessitated careful workmanship, with the result that in many examples, to enjoy the wonderful harmony of colour and design, a strong glass is almost an essential. And then one's mind wanders back to the date of their creation, the sixteenth century or earlier, before Western artists had influenced Slavdom, and when the native workman depended upon his untutored feeling. Further, it may be recalled that the rewards of those days were small in comparison with the labour. There was no Pope to be the patron of struggling genius. It was left for love, devotion, call it what you will, to sweeten the fruits of the toiler.

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From the above brief notes it is easy to see what a wealth of mysticism surrounds the Russian ikon, ancient or modern. The collector may snatch at the age-coloured canvas attributed to Rubloff, the master of his craft, but there is mystery and dignity and companionship—yes, companionship—in the humble reminder of that Divinity of which Orthodoxy is representative to Slavdom. And in these troublous times, when life is uncertain and sorrow covers the Russian land, the peasant ikon is doing its work. It

comforts the weary soldier; he kisses one as he goes into action; his cold lips press it in his last agony, and, from a corner in his far-away home, the Christ looks down with pitying eyes upon those he has loved and left.

A. L.

THE "CREDO" OF THE MOUJIK

IT is one of the oldest proverbs in the Russian language that, "Whom God protects, none can harm," and to me it appears emblematic of the religion of the moujik. To many prior to this war, Russia was as a closed book, and her discovery, if I may use such a term, is likely to assert its influence in every department of our national and individual existence. Doubtless it came as something of a shock to the disdainful Westerner that he could learn anything from the Slav whom he didactically assumed to be some two hundred years behind him in the march of civilisation. But it is, perhaps, in the direction of religious thought that probably unwittingly we have approached and are continually approaching, the "credo" of the moujik. With us there has been something in the nature of a religious revival. By that I do not mean either a revival of argument over obscure doctrinal points, or a revival of disputation concerning dogma, but almost a

national tendency towards the fundamental basis of all Christianity, which is summed up in the one word "Faith." Now with faith there must be a definite note of simplicity, and it is this same simplicity which is mirrored in the soul of the Russian people, and which forms one of the most prominent characteristics of the Slav temperament. With us religious observance had threatened to become an external formality; certain duties were accomplished at certain times; certain practices were observed; but emphatically it was no longer a proof of real spirituality. That spirituality, as understood by the Russian, had almost ceased to exist.

With the humblest and most uneducated of moujiks the Almighty is an ever-present factor. The reality of a God and of a hereafter, of the benefits derivable from prayer, of the solace which faith alone offers to those who suffer on earth, these are all accepted with the same lack of question as are the seasons of the year. These are the elementals of his existence. Perhaps his ideas of theology are crude and vague; perhaps—as is actually the case—remnants of a bygone paganism can still be traced in his primitive beliefs; but the great basic fact remains of an

unquestioning faith which has been so imperceptibly blended with his mental attitude that he approaches more nearly to the Christ-man than his erudite brothers in the West. I have heard tourists in Russia contemptuously describe the outward and visible forms of Orthodox practice as "childish superstition." I suggest that they were unconsciously paying the moujik a compliment, for was it not Christ who said, "Except ye be converted and become as little children ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

Every peasant izba possesses its ikon which serves as a constant reminder that there is a spiritual side to life, even for the lowly, the poor and the illiterate. When he enters a room the moujik invariably raises his eyes to the sacred picture and crosses himself before greeting his family or friends. And the same in the street. The hurrying crowds, intent upon their own affairs, find time to pause a moment in front of those shrines which are so common in Russian towns and murmur a prayer before passing on their way. If one were to ask a moujik why he did this he would answer that he was paying respect to the Almighty, who is as real to him as is his Tsar, whom probably he will never see. But

go a step further. Does the peasant, it may be queried, show in his private life any evidence of this influence? The reply is most assuredly in the affirmative. Speaking from some experience, I have no hesitation in saying that he is generally the kindliest, most willing and most generous of men. In him the sacred injunction, "Do unto others, etc.," takes concrete shape. In no other country is the hand of sympathy so readily extended to the unfortunate, be he mentally deficient, physically deformed or even morally depraved. The Russian sees not the revolting or sordid side of the case, but is merely impressed with the fact that here is a creature, a child of God, who is not as others, strong, sturdy and normal, and hence merits special consideration. The Samaritan may be jingling only a couple of kopecks in his pocket, but he will deem it very natural and proper to give one of them to this brother since he argues that the latter is not self-dependent, and so deserves above all the protection and consideration of his fellows. And this is done with that same spirit of chivalry which was the keynote of the actions of the Master's earliest followers. No one need go hungry in Russia if there is bread. Why? Because poverty

is no crime, and the peasant will gladly share his meal, rejoicing that he has been permitted to give. To do otherwise would be foreign to all those preconceived ideals which he has formulated for himself or which he has absorbed unknowingly from the day of his birth. Further, he is innately a gentleman, and who shall say that in that word is not summed up most of the virtues connected with the primal tenets of Christianity. That he fell hopelessly when the State placed at his door an illimitable supply of vodka is scarcely surprising. Human nature was born in frailty—a fact sometimes overlooked—and, at all events, the drunken moujik has never learnt to be offensive in his cups. An Englishman once remarked to me in Archangel, "Funny chaps, these Russians! Why they actually apologise for being drunk."

And in this connection such days are past and the vodka monopoly, with its millions of revenue sucked from the vital tissues of the masses, has gone for ever. Ivan, the Russian "Tommy," has proved himself a clean fighter during the past sixteen months, though, to be sure, in the whole of history he has never proved aught else—only who read Russian history before the war! But

he knows no blood lust, he has no desire to kill, and only the spur that he is fighting for his beloved country and with the blessing of God, gives him that indomitable demand for victory which is the puzzle and despair of his enemies. Fear, naturally, is foreign to him. "Whom God protects, none can harm." That motto he carries with him in his knapsack and he resigns all to the will of that same Creator he reverenced in his far away izba, in his village church, and in the streets of his provincial capital; that same Creator who seems endlessly to watch him with mysterious eyes from time-blackened and newly-painted ikons alike, and Who promised a repentant thief that he should be with Him in paradise.

I repeat that the moujik, with his childish and absolute faith in the intangible beyond, offers a striking lesson to those who for too long have relegated religion to a precept rather than a practice, who have seen in it rather a convention than an actual living force fraught with strength sufficient to mould the fate of nations.

A. L.

85970

VERESCHAGIN

IT is related that Catherine the Great once gave it as her opinion, founded on twenty years of experience, that the people of Russia were certainly the most singular and probably the most original in the world. And it is a fact that if one surveys the achievements of her most eminent sons, there is always apparent a seemingly fantastic point of view or a peculiar treatment of a subject differing *in toto* from that to which one has become accustomed from other European nations. Russian genius carries with it a certain atmosphere of the bizarre, which renders it not only attractive, but lends to it either an air of romance or infuses it with something not far removed from the morbid. Life is replete with brutal reality, and the Slav, for the most part, draws therefrom inspiration. He approaches his task of pointing the road to idealistic perfection from the opposite end of things. Thus the Westerner depicts what his imagination suggests as Utopian; he strives to show by prose,

verse, or canvas to what sublime heights mankind can attain. The Russian prefers to exhibit the sores and squalor of a faulty system—international or social—in the hope that the horrors he exhibits may react upon human nature and lead to a demand for betterment.

To this school belonged Vassili Vassilievich Vereschagin, painter and man of action. One's thoughts turn towards him at the present moment because, if the expression may be used, he specialised in war. He both loved it and loathed it at the same time. He loved it because of its danger, in which his Slav temperament revelled, and because it supplied him with the particular scenes and episodes which he desired to translate upon canvas. He loathed it because he was a deep thinker, and because his sensitive nature was profoundly touched by the sufferings it entailed, and of which he was a witness, coupled with the fact that he could not reconcile it with the primal truths of Christianity. It was after the Russo-Turkish war that he seriously started upon his campaign of teaching the world what war really spells by the medium of his brush. The results of those labours have chiefly found a resting place in the Tretiakovsky Gallery outside Moscow,

and form as grim a legacy as could well be imagined.

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But I am minded to speak rather of the man himself, as revealed in his autobiography; much that he wrote rings true to-day, and, moreover, he reveals himself as an apt student of the psychological aspect of war. First of all, then, his feelings under fire! He is describing an attack which he witnessed in the company of Skóbeleff, and he writes: "I walked on Skóbeleff's left hand, and I confess that the clatter of the firearms (which sounded something like the rolling of drums) and the whistling of the bullets made one rather anxious. One could not help thinking, 'You will be knocked down directly and then you will learn what you wanted to learn—the meaning of war.'" Then, with great *naïveté* he watches Skóbeleff in the vain hope of seeing some outward and visible sign of trepidation in the demeanour of that officer. In this he is disappointed, and when he compliments the general upon his bravery, the latter remarks: "Nonsense. They think that I am brave, and that I'm afraid of nothing, but I confess to you that I am a coward. Whenever I go into action I say to myself that

this time there will be an end of me." Vereschagin continues: "It pleased me to hear such a confession, for afterwards my own character seemed less timid. Not that I ever set a particularly high value on courage, but I had an extreme aversion from cowardice. As I felt very uncomfortable and was generally afraid each time I came under a heavy fire that a ball would lay me low, I was glad that Skóbeleff also by no means faced death with indifference, but understood how to conceal his feelings. 'I have made it a rule,' he said, 'never to bend down under fire. If you once permit yourself to do that, you will be drawn on further than you wish!' I am now of opinion that no man is ever quite calm at heart under fire."

In the course of the same action, Colonel Kuropatkin—the same who is now to command the Russian armies against Bulgaria—was wounded. The wound was painful, and it was not surprising that the colonel, during a long and agonising transit to the base, was sufficiently pessimistic in speaking to other officers to discourage them. This greatly irritated Skóbeleff, who freely relieved his feelings to Vereschagin. The latter remarks thereon: "If a wounded soldier brought from a battlefield is asked how matters stand there, he

generally answers, 'Badly, sir. We are getting the worst of it. They are too many for us.' He is worsted, and it seems to him that everything is lost. It appears to me that it ought to be a rule that no wounded man, from the private to the commander, should be allowed to remain at the front." The following proves that Vereschagin, had he not been a painter, could have made a living as a descriptive writer. As a vignette of a battlefield it is exquisite: "The figure of a soldier appeared near me. He went to the bodies of the officers one after another, bent down, looked at the dead man's face and went on. I followed him with my eyes. At last he bends down over the body and arranges and cleans the dress, puts the head straight, and, folding the hands on the breast, kisses them. It was an officer's servant, who had found his dead master! For the last time he arranged his dress."

* * * * *

It is also worthy of note just now that during the Russo-Turkish war, besides the regular army recruited by conscription, there were many volunteers who by occupation were not professional soldiers. Not unnaturally they came in for a goodly amount of criticism, since it was

the contention of many that they could not be sufficiently disciplined to be of much service. Vereschagin, however, laboured under no such delusions. He had taken part in a torpedo-boat attack on the Danube which had been bungled. He writes: "I may here be allowed to say a few words about volunteers who are declared to be only an encumbrance in battle. My opinion is just the reverse of this. If a volunteer understands discipline and also the affair in hand, he will, as a matter of course, be not only brave, but, what is very important, cool also. When, for example, the second torpedo had to be got ready, the gunner was so timid that he unconsciously turned round and round as if he was looking for something. I pulled out my knife and cut the cord. And the steersman already mentioned steered, in his nervousness, in the wrong direction. . . . These instances seem to prove to me that the soldier or sailor who is forced to go forward does not do so with the same degree of composure or presence of mind as the volunteer who wishes to go forward."

Vereschagin was a great admirer of Skóbeleff, although he did not always see eye to eye with him, particularly in the latter's bitter hatred and

fear of Germany. One incident, however, related by the painter has a sinister significance at this moment. Skóbeleff had been on a mission to Berlin, and in the course of a somewhat heated conversation with Prince Frederick Charles of Prussia, the Prince patted him on the shoulder, and said: "My dear friend, do what you like; Austria must go to Salonika."

That those who sit at home cannot possibly picture the agony of actual conflict is well evidenced by the final words of Vereschagin's diary. "As soon as the war was finished I returned to my studio and began to transfer my impressions to canvas—impressions of battles, wounds, disease, and all sorts of misery, the inevitable attendants of every war. The result was such that people would not believe me; they said that I lied and that my pictures were the work of my imagination!"

It only remains to add that Vereschagin's pursuit of realism caused his death at the comparatively early age of 62. He was a guest on board Admiral Makaroff's ill-fated flagship, the *Petropavlovsk*, which was torpedoed and sunk by the Japanese off Port Arthur in 1904.

A. L.

A RUSSIAN PICNIC

WHEN strangers, armed with letters of introduction, arrive at any of our provincial towns they are shown the principal lions of the place—be they cathedral and art gallery, or town hall and factory. In Russia the first idea of entertaining the new arrivals is to take them forth on a picnic. Hence it was that the day after we had landed from the river steamer at a small town in Northern Russia, two cabs stood at the door of our inn, to be laden with three young women, refreshments, and our two selves. It was a glorious day. The sunlight shimmered on the river and on the white churches, the leaves of the trees which lined the streets moved languidly in the faint breeze, the dust was ankle-deep, and the mosquitoes hummed lazily about our heads. The evening before we had presented a letter from a friend to the chief merchant of this river town and had instantly

been pledged by the younger members of his family for this expedition. Properly to enjoy a picnic is a privilege of youth; it should go side by side with Mark Twain's dictum that only one who can relish a Bath bun after a hearty dinner need not be suspected of advancing years. Therefore, as all Russians enjoy picnics, all Russians are young, and this quality is shared by some Russian Jews, since David Abramovitch Kogan and his family were of that persuasion.

Sonia Davidovna and Vera, her sister, were extremely pretty and sprightly Jewesses, their sprightliness being tinged with a shade of seriousness, since each was a wage-earner in a specialised profession. With them was a friend, and when I saw her my heart sank as perceptibly as the springs of the cab in which she was seated. Her charms might have been described by the charitable as "opulent," and if she had been content with a passive *rôle* suited to her dimensions all would have been well. Unfortunately, however, she was as frisky as a kitten, and as coquettish and arch as a maiden of three summers. Her name, so she told me with downcast eyes and a finger to her lip, was Johanna Samsonovna Juliensky, no relation to the Kogans, but soon—she hoped—

to be. Then I understood why young David Davidovitch Kogan was mysteriously detained on business at Kasan for an indefinite period! But Miss Johanna was not averse to masculine society other than the reluctant David's. On catching sight of my "good man" she patted the seat beside her, and with "nods and becks and wreathéd smiles" invited him to be her companion on the drive. The object of her attentions observed in his native tongue that any sort of painful death would be preferable to such a prospect, and turned a rich crimson with irritation. The picnic promised to be distinctly amusing after all, and I forgot my overwhelming desire to sleep comfortably under my mosquito-net.

Finally, the procession started; Sonia, Vera, the refreshments and I in one creaking cab preceding Johanna and her unhappy victim in another. Half-way up the first hill we heard the isvostchik in the rear apparently delivering an oration in a loud voice, but his patois and excitement made him incomprehensible to me, and I was obliged to ask what it all meant. "He says," answered Vera Davidovna, blushing, "that he has the weight of three people in his cab, and that he cannot keep to the bargain we made with him

before he saw our friend." "They are always grubi [rude] these Russians," called Johanna Samsonovna; "pay no attention to him! I am used to it." "Friend, indeed!" sniffed Sonia, "she *would* come when she heard there was to be an Englishman in the party. She had never seen one before, but she told me that all Englishmen had red hair. Your husband has not, so it isn't true, is it?" I was about to answer when the oration behind us as suddenly changed into exclamations of gratitude, and I suspected that a rouble from my "good man" had altered the key. "She is indeed her father's daughter," remarked our isvostchik over his shoulder in a confidential tone, but we judged it wiser to ignore him.

Our cab wheels settled in deep ruts worn by other vehicles, and we now jogged along smoothly enough. Already we were out of the little town, and only the pine trees and the scorched, dry grass kept us company. On a hill to the right lay the cemetery, to which my attention was drawn as one of the "sights." It was a melancholy spot—parched by the sun in summer and covered deep by snow in winter, the weather-beaten wooden crosses showing by their rakish slant the prevailing direction of the wind. Vera

and Sonia both sighed with a sort of melancholy pleasure and asserted that, to them, a graveyard had a great fascination. "It makes one think of the uncertainty of life and of the inevitableness of death," said Vera the philosopher. Just then a little group of peasants rose up from the hillock on which they had been sitting. One woman, who had her face muffled in a red scarf, caught Sonia's eye. "Pardon an instant's delay," said she, "that appears to be some one in need of my services." She slipped to the ground, snatching a flat case from the bottom of the cab as she did so, and the isvostchik willingly brought his horse to a halt. The other cab drew up behind us, and we were witnesses of as strange a scene as, I dare assert, had ever taken place upon that dusty road. Vera Davidovna, at the command of her sister, opened the flat case, which proved to be full of gleaming dental instruments. Uncorking a small bottle of spirit, she poured its contents into a tray containing several business-like tools and applied a lighted match, to the great delight and awe of the children of the group, who shyly drew near after much whispering. Meanwhile Sonia had interrogated her patient, who, between groans, told her of an agonising pain in her jaw.

Stripping the face of its swathing of muffler, she opened the reluctant mouth and peered within. Evidently it needed but a glance to satisfy her. "Quick, Vera, the forceps!" she cried. The flame had died away in the tray and Vera daintily offered the forceps, now sterilised by the heat, to her sister. The patient, gasping and gurgling, sat down on the hillock, grasping a tuft of grass in each hand. There was an instant's silence, then a grunt, and Sonia waved in the air a large, broken molar, its late owner all smiles and gratitude. We were once more on our way before I had recovered from my astonishment. It was not often, the girls explained to me, that such things happened and, fortunately for the old woman, Sonia had come straight from her work to join the party, bringing her instruments with her.

"But you have fine teeth," said the youthful dentist, looking at me with an air of professional admiration; "I suppose you never have to have a tooth drawn?" "Never!" said I firmly; for I suspected her of wishing to try her hand on me as well, and I was thankful that at this moment we came upon the site chosen for our picnic. It was a small enclosure, where was

situated a deserted church. The grass, kept green by the presence of a large pond, was tall and rank, and the mosquitoes fastened upon us avidly. From a peasant's isba near by a samovar was procured, and our party was increased by the presence of a little girl, whose name was Alexandra, but whose age her shy tongue refused to tell. She was desperately interested in our cakes, one of which she was coaxed to accept, and she sat under a bush nibbling the sugar while she watched our every gesture like an intelligent puppy. Besides the cakes, which had suffered considerably in transport, there were, of course, hard-boiled eggs, without which no picnic is ever complete, and some fearful and wonderful meat sandwiches, which were undoubtedly "kosher." Johanna Samsonovna displayed a healthy appetite, and even the mosquitoes, which settled on her thin blouse and were soon hard at work, could not distract her from the business on hand. She chattered unceasingly however, and plied us with questions about England. Were there many Jews there? Did they like it? Would we like her to come back with us to England? "Heaven forfend!" said my "good man" under his breath. "What does he say?" inquired Johanna,

negotiating a very creamy cake with doubtful success. "He says," I replied mendaciously, "that there is nothing that he would like better." "Ah! he is so nice, so charming. Has he a brother?" "Many," I answered, "and one still waits for an ideal wife." This was too much for Vera and Sonia. They rose suddenly and walked to the church door, as though to inspect more closely that dilapidated piece of wood, but I could see their shoulders shaking. A shriek from Johanna made them turn to find the cause. My husband was lighting his pipe. "I see this for the first time!" cried Johanna. "Now I know he is really an Englishman, though his hair is not red. In all pictures the Englishman holds a pipe in his mouth." "Dash it all!" said the object of her curiosity, "I can't stand this much longer. I am not a waxwork at Madame Tussaud's!" He struck another match in his embarrassment. It was a wax vesta, and even Vera and Sonia had never before seen such a thing. Anxious to divert attention from himself, he placed a few in Johanna's outstretched palm. "Thank you," said that damsel, rolling her eyes at him. "I shall ever treasure them, and when, some day, I arrive at your shop door I shall send one in to

you, and you will not have forgotten Johanna Samsonovna."

Fortunately we were able to make the mosquitoes an excuse for a speedy return, for I do not think the plump neck of Johanna was quite safe after her last remark, and by a little judicious juggling she was obliged to drive with Vera and myself. The white night was upon us as we entered the town. By the river-bank the men and maidens strolled hand-in-hand, while, from boats drifting lazily with the current, came the plaintive sounds of concertinas. The steamer whereon we hoped to find our evening meal (since the town possessed no restaurants and our "hotel" made no pretence of supplying anything but a samovar) was lying at her wharf. We expressed our thanks to our two kind little hostesses, for Johanna had alighted at the paternal mansion two streets away. When we returned from our dinner I found a note awaiting me; it was from Sonia Davidovna. "We have just heard from our brother that he has married a girl in Kasan. I think that, unless you are leaving very shortly, Johanna will really go with you to England."

The next morning saw us on our way.

M. L.

OMSK

I. In Peace

TRAINS enter the Omsk station with the thoughtful deliberation which characterises all Russian trains, pause for half an hour or so and then rumble along on their way east or west. And it is on the strength of this that the cheerful globe-trotter and the glib journalist—first cousins to the angler—remark "Yes, I know Omsk; I passed through it on the Trans-Siberian." Yet Omsk itself is only beginning to expand along the five miles of road which lie between it and the station which bears its name, and the globe-trotter, peering from his coupé window, can barely discern on the horizon the white cloud of its roofs.

Time was when Omsk was the abode of footpads and brigands, and when its hotels swarmed with uninvited guests which invaded every nook and cranny and rendered the travellers' nights hideous. All that is changed. Electric lights gleam at every

corner, even the great bazaar has lost its terrors, and hotel managers have discovered that iron bedsteads and spring mattresses offer no sanctuary to the tormentors. Omsk is growing in wisdom and in prosperity. The signs of prosperity are not far to seek. As I passed swiftly in my cab through the little village which has sprung up around the station and on to the wide road which leads to the town, I could see long lines of trucks lingering on sidings, their gaping mouths ready for the butter, eggs, and cheese which would form their freight. One line of rails reached nearly into Omsk, but it was intended solely for goods and not for the convenience of passengers. We whirled along, and I could see steamers for the Irtish and the Ob, large and small, moving and stationary, loading or discharging the cargo which is making Omsk a bustling steppe town and the Winnipeg of Siberia. When Omsk acquires waterworks and good streets I shall have no complaints to make, but such things in Russia follow long after a cathedral and an opera-house, and though Omsk has both of these luxuries the water is still obtained from the river in carts and bestowed upon the inhabitants in small quantities.

As for the streets—no matter what the season

may be, they are nightmares! In spring and autumn they are bogs, in winter they are whirling banks of snow, and in summer the clouds of dust which rise under the horses' hoofs turn daylight into a London fog. On the day after my arrival I drove out to see an acquaintance. I left the hotel as respectable a member of society as my limited luggage would allow, and I arrived at my destination a dust-covered object, sneezing, coughing, and weeping copiously. Fortunately I did not have to explain between sneezes that I had neither influenza nor hay-fever, for every one in Omsk is similarly afflicted in the dry season, and I soon recovered. But I think the chief factor in my recovery was the sight which met my eyes. The entire English colony, in flannels, was playing a game of tennis with Germany and Sweden. The English colony was very sunburnt and made frequent use of that expressive Russian expletive "Chort," whenever Germany or Sweden—whose skill was not equal to their strength—sent a ball into the raspberry bushes at the side. On the verandah sat Russia behind a samovar, while a bulldog and a white Samoyede lay in the shade with their eyes firmly fixed on the cake. It was a variation of what might be taking place in a

Surrey garden at that identical moment, and I had almost to pinch myself to realise that I was actually in Siberia. Only when I was told that, but a short distance from this peaceful spot, robbers still plied their trade at night and vanished with their spoils into the steppe did I feel that Siberia had still some way to go before it became Surrey.

Not that I would be pleased if that change should ever come to pass. It is not an unpleasant idea—especially if an automatic pistol is in one's grasp—to fancy that "the good old days," when Knightsbridge was frequented by highwaymen and ladies were relieved of their jewels on Putney Heath, have been born again in Siberia. To be truthful, however, I never saw a bandit—to know him—while I was in Omsk. Nevertheless, there was romance in driving at night over the hills and across the valleys of the main thoroughfare, past the cathedral silvered by the moon, past the bazaar with its rows of silent booths, seeing shadowy figures, probably most estimable fathers of families, flitting up side streets, until the bright lights of the Hotel Rossia and the still brighter lights of the adjacent cinema came into sight.

Cinemas in Omsk did a thriving business when

the opera-house was closed, and nowhere have I seen better films. As a rival attraction there was the little theatre in the "Club" gardens, where a stock company gave old favourites, ranging from *The Daughter of the Regiment* to *The Geisha*. These gardens at once amused and touched me. They represented such a heroic effort to fight the forces of Nature and to make a little spot of grass and flowers where none had any inclination to grow. The trees were small and rather surly in appearance, as though they had been put there against their will, and were by no means inclined to make the best of it. The flowers, in their sandy beds, drooped languidly, and the grass was coarse and dry. However, any one would have recognised the place as a garden, so the desired end had been obtained. In this oasis was a pavilion for the band, the galvanised-iron theatre I have already mentioned, and a restaurant, open at one side, where military, official, and commercial Omsk could lunch, dine, or sup. Many a time, accompanied by half the English colony or, on occasions, by all of it, have I sat in the club restaurant and eaten steaming "raki" (a delicious small crayfish) and "bitochki" (a glorified Hamburg steak), and watched the greetings and

leave-takings and have been the recipient of curious glances. For when the resident English colony numbers but two persons, any addition to it, even temporarily, is conspicuous. Of resident Germans there were thirty all told, of Americans only an occasional commercial traveller, and this last could be said of all other nationalities, so it was small wonder that the moujik classed us all as "Niemtsi" (Germans).

The Siberian moujik is a far more alert creature than his brother in Russia. He is more resourceful, harder working, and also a trifle inclined to bumptiousness. He waxes prosperous on his egg and butter trade, and there is usually money jingling in his pockets and a broad smile of content upon his face. But besides the moujiks, the tradesmen, and the soldiers, there are Tartars and Khirgiz, who form the floating population of Omsk. Of these latter the Tartars are generally to be found in the bazaar, which bears as much resemblance to its namesake in Constantinople as it does to the Bon Marché in Paris. It covers a vast amount of ground, and its ramshackle booths contain everything the imagination of man can picture: fruits and furs, saddles and ready-made clothing, trunks should he wish to travel,

and kitchen utensils should he wish to remain at home. There are Chinese opium pipes of rare workmanship jostled by cheap earthenware pots, while curious old brasses lie side by side with German saws.

The Tartars are invariably the greengrocers, crying their wares with energy, and the whole market resounds with the hum proceeding from the throats of vendors and purchasers. Walking through the crowd, mingling with them or standing stolidly aloof, are the Khirgiz. Their wealth is in camels and horses, and they can ride with all the skill, though with but little of the grace, of the Cossack. They are strange little men with a decidedly Mongolian cast of features, and wear a sheepskin coat and cap when the mercury registers ninety degrees in the shade. Gipsies of the steppe, they have no home except their tents in summer, and their wattle huts in winter. They own no land, and have been exempt from military service, in spite of loyally volunteering; so they are here to-day and gone to-morrow, wandering over the rich pastures with their flocks and herds, coming to Omsk to drive a few shrewd bargains and disappearing once more into the unknown. From my window at the Rossia I could see them jogging

on their sturdy ponies over the bridge crowded with cabs and carts, on their way to where their families awaited the result of their expedition.

Across the bridge from the Rossia stood the white palace of the Governor-General—a building conspicuous from its isolation, and not the home one would imagine required by the Viceroy of a country nearly equal in size to France and Rumania combined. But what the Governor-General of Akmolinsk province lacked in panoply he made up in executive ability, and I trust he is still there. It was his prompt action which put down the student riots of 1905–6 when those misguided efforts showed symptoms of extending even to Omsk, and he was a living exponent of that advice once given by an Elizabethan statesman, "Be slow to speak, be quick to think, be swift to strike." In spite of his German name, Schmidt, he was a Cossack, which is only one more proof, if that were necessary, that the Cossacks of the olden days were recruited from many nations, instead of being a distinct race as we are so prone to imagine.

It was General Schmidt who was in part responsible for the law and order in Omsk which rendered it possible for a "lone woman" to drive

about the town in perfect safety; and when, on the day of my departure, I crossed the bridge on my way to the river steamer, I felt that I owed him a debt of gratitude. I was laden with priceless copies of London papers, only ten days old, and a huge collection of sevenpenny novels, all of which I had faithfully promised to hand over when read to the first Englishman I met. The last whistle blew and we slid from the dock. I saw two smiling, clean-shaven faces there among the bearded moujiks. "Niemtsi!" said a voice beside me. I turned. "You are quite wrong," said I, politely but firmly, "that is the English colony at Omsk." Whereupon my neighbour waved delightedly and gave them smile for smile, whilst Omsk, its cinemas and churches, receded and the rolling steppe stretched before us.

M. L.

II. In War

At an hour when most people are sleeping soundly in their beds, I walked down the gangway of the *Ivan Korniloff* and set foot once more in Omsk. I took the precaution of treading lightly as I brushed by rows of snoring

Cossacks, but the precaution was unnecessary, for not one of them awoke. They were dreaming doubtless of the glory they would win in the coming war, and of how they would return to point proudly to a gleaming medal and say to an awestruck wife, "Look at this, Anna Ivanovna! See what the little Father has given me!" For four days they had sung and chattered and slept, and now they had reached the end of the first stage of their journey. Others had arrived before them, and Omsk, in the early morning light, was a heaving mass of khaki and sheepskin which moved from the station to the town and back again. At a snail's pace my cab crawled through the maze formed by carts and conscripts, mounted officers and rumbling field-kitchens, and, personally, I was bewildered. Little news, and that vague and conflicting, had left me uncertain of all things save the one fact that Russia was at war and that I had seen a section of the greatest mobilisation in the history of the nation. But whether Russia's adversary was Austria or Germany, or both, and what part England was to play, and why it had all come about, I could not say, and no one I had met could tell me. On reaching the Rossia I was confronted

with the cheerful words that there was not a room available, and that officers were even sleeping in extemporised cubicles in the halls. I was further consoled by the information that, for the same reason, at no hotel in Omsk would I find a place to lay my head. The manager of the Rossia had forgotten one room, however, which I remembered. It was courteously known as the "office" of a portion of the English colony, but was generally used by that person as a place in which to read home papers, smoke many cigarettes, and write thick letters to a distant and unappreciative damsel. In that room I ensconced myself, despite all protestations on the part of the hotel staff, and serenely announced that nothing could move me except the offer of suitable accommodation. Naturally this was shortly forthcoming, and I felt only slightly uneasy when I later encountered the reproachful glances of a stout major of Cossacks who found the inconveniences of war had begun sooner than he had anticipated.

That afternoon the English colony sat on my little balcony and gave me the history of the last three weeks. England and Russia were allies at last; France was with us and Belgium had

been invaded; the war would be over in three months—one had only to look down in the street to be sure of that. Certainly it was an inspiring sight! Over the bridge, past the hotel, on their way to headquarters, marched endless streams of men. They were clad in tattered coats, in old sheepskins and in alpaca jackets, with the inevitable high boots and baggy trousers. All were smiling and joking as they marched. All were healthy and strong, from the great giants who towered head and shoulders above the throng, to the sturdy lads whose legs were not long enough for the measured stride. There were other streams which swept past in the opposite direction. These were uniformed and equipped at every point, even to blue enamelled tea-pots swinging from each man's waist, and thick, grey overcoats rolled like blankets on their shoulders. On and on they came; a study in grey-green, touched here and there with splashes of blue and glints of steel. As they marched they sang: "The merchant who has cheated me, you never more will see; I asked him out to dinner and put vodka in his tea"; "Chiaka" (the seagull); the song of the gipsy maid and the bashful youth; and other equally salubrious ditties. Trains were

waiting for them at the station, huge cattle-trucks into which they clambered with jests and laughing comments, whilst other trains disgorged dishevelled reservists who would soon be as trim as they.

To all intents and purposes Omsk was a vast camp. Between the station and the town, brown tents had transformed the fields into a mushroom-bed, and the river-bank resounded with the shouts of troopers and the neighing and splashing of horses, as men and beasts bathed and drank. In every available enclosure were innumerable two-wheeled carts, painted grey, with the significant red cross on their sides. Each house had its quota of billeted soldiers, and the English colony played host to half a dozen. "Men," said their officer on installing them, "this is the house of an ally. Be on your best behaviour." The result was that six privates were metamorphosed into six mice; they slipped off their boots in order to make less noise, endeavoured to smoke with their heads out of the window, and spoke only in whispers until reassured that even the best of good behaviour need not entail such efforts.

Mounted Khirgiz in their sheepskins clattered through the streets with dusty droves of their

hardy steppe ponies, for which the military authorities gave a good price, and renewed their offer to fight for the Tsar. Since that time such permission has happily been granted, but in those days they had to content themselves with the knowledge that their little ponies were among the best obtainable. Cossacks there were in plenty. Not the dull, brutish creatures pictured by some novelists, but the ideal troopers, neither fat nor thin, neither tall nor short, with kindly, good-natured faces and eyes twinkling with mirth. The Akmolinsk Cossack is not as picturesque a figure as his cousin of the Caucasus. His uniform is not decorated with pockets, buttons, and straps in such wild profusion, nor does he wear his hair sweeping over his cap in one long lock. In time of peace he is a diligent farmer on the banks of the Irtish, but in time of war or trouble he is the right hand of the Governor-General.

Daily more than thirty thousand soldiers passed in and out of Omsk, yet neither while the sun shone nor when darkness fell was there any sign of the turbulent spirits who must have existed amongst such large bodies of men. In front of the Rossia always sat two Cossacks on

their beloved horses, and to them was given the responsibility for order at that busy corner. Not that the responsibility seemed to weigh heavily upon them, for they appeared far more interested in the manœuvres of two small black pigs taking a congenial mud bath, or in returning friendly greetings, than in the gravity of their task. Yet their mere presence was quite sufficient to render the crowded street as free from disturbance as Park Lane.

In these days the English colony and I reconstructed the map of Europe to our own satisfaction. One amongst us possessed a small atlas of antiquated date and microscopic size, and to us it was a treasure without price. But the news, as afforded by the long strips of paper containing the latest telegrams and published twice daily, was distinctly tantalising. With a laudable desire to give the purchaser full value for his kopeck, the same telegram would be repeated for days in order to fill an otherwise empty space. Consequently we were firmly convinced that England had sunk and captured at least two hundred merchant ships in twenty-four hours, and that the Germans were falling before Liége by the million. The Germans in Omsk were none

too happy. Their colony—fifteen times larger than our own—remained discreetly invisible, and I myself was given just a taste of what led to their eventual retirement from the public view. I was awakened in the early hours of the morning by a discreet tapping at my door. Sitting up, I called, "Kto tam?" ("Who is there?"). But there was no reply and the knocking continued. On opening the door I found an officer, who had often assisted in our game of dividing Germany amongst the Allies, with a guard of soldiers. In a whisper he apologised for his mistake and asked which of the adjoining rooms was occupied by a certain German traveller. I gave him the information, and the next day was told that all the "Niemtsi" were snug and safe in the fortress. That particular traveller had a particularly objectionable wife, and I often smiled to myself, as I watched her evil looks or heard her strident voice, over the luck which had given me a finger in consigning her husband to a place not so comfortable as the Rossia. Until the order was issued which transferred all such gentry from Omsk to the charmingly isolated town of Tara, this specimen of German womanhood could see from her window the pitiful processions which occasionally varied

the close lines of the departing regiments. They were always of the same nature. In front walked a priest, his long hair curling on his shoulders, bearing an ikon. Behind him stumbled and tottered a score of women dressed in black. All were singing an anthem for the souls of those who had fallen in battle, but sometimes the heart of a mother broke beneath her burden and her voice was choked with sobs. Still they struggled on, the plaintive wail sounding fainter and fainter, until the doors of the great cathedral opened to receive them.

But my days at Omsk came at last to an end. My luggage and I were wedged into a cab and I drove once more to the railway station. The stationmaster, that harassed, hard-working dignitary, emerged from his office to make quite sure that his " lady ally," as he called me, should travel in comfort to Petrograd. The English colony was there in full force, armed with offerings of chocolates and books, and I willingly carried a bulky letter to the unappreciative damsel, which I knew had cost many hours of cogitation and a reckless consumption of cigarettes in the writing. The night was dark, but I could dimly see the troop-trains with their living freight, and I could

hear the buzz of men's voices as work progressed unceasingly, untiringly.

"We have one bottle of wine left," called the English colony, as the train pulled slowly out of the station, "so we must measure it out with a medicine dropper, but we will drink your health at Christmas."

"Drink to my return to Omsk," I answered.

Their reply was lost, but I know they did as I asked and that I shall see Omsk again. May it be soon!

M. L.

A SIBERIAN EXILE OF 1800

IF ever a man had cause to see Siberia through blue spectacles it was August von Kotzebue, native of Weimar and author of countless plays and satires which have not survived to our day. Yet when one reads his Memoirs, containing an account of what he justly calls "the most remarkable year of my life," one is obliged to come to the conclusion that the life of a political exile a century ago was not as hard as some would have us believe.

On the tenth of April, 1800, August von Kotzebue, accompanied by his wife—a Russian—and his three young children, left Berlin for a four months' visit to his wife's parents near Riga. Papers, passports, permission—everything was in order; but, in spite of all these precautions, Kotzebue was arrested at the frontier town of Polangen and separated from his family, to be taken to St. Petersburg for the purpose, so he was told, of having certain mysterious matters, not

clearly explained to him either then or afterwards, put straight in the capital. The good August spares his reader no detail of the mental agony endured by himself and his wife, the faithful Christel, and paints a pathetic picture of their final adieux to the accompaniment of the lamentations of the three babies, who realised only that their father and mother were in trouble. Soon after leaving Mitau his last hopes were extinguished by the information that Tobolsk, and not Petersburg, was his destination, and he resolved to escape from his captors. How he eluded the vigilance of his guard, and how he was recaptured, takes too long in the telling; but two days after his flight saw him once more *en route* to Tobolsk, plunged in gloom and unable to eat. His guard consisted only of the driver of the carriage and a most unsympathetic person named Alexander Schulkins, the latter an extremely stupid individual, whose avarice was only exceeded by his appetite, and who could not understand how any catastrophe could cause a man to lose his taste for the good things of the table. His sole virtue seems to have been that of bravery, and several times, in crossing swollen rivers and in severe thunderstorms, he won the admiration of his

captive, whose own indifference to danger, he freely admits, was due merely to the mental stupor induced by his sorrows.

Passing through Moscow, they travelled by Kazan and Ekaterinburg, and between that city and Tiumen Kotzebue met with an experience which is better left in his own words. "We had stopped at a village to change horses, and while waiting we drank some sour milk offered us at an inn. I was standing at the doorway dipping my bread in this beverage, when I saw a white-haired man of seventy, obviously very ill. He knelt at my feet and humbly asked me if I had any letters for him from Reval. My emotion prevented my reply. Thinking that I had not understood, he again began his question, when a peasant woman came between us, and said to me in a low voice: 'He is an imbecile; every time a traveller comes this way he gets out of bed and drags himself to the stranger with a similar request.' She begged me to give him a scrap of paper, since, to satisfy him, he must have something resembling a letter, otherwise he would refuse to go away and would weep. I acceded to the woman's request, and the poor creature, who had watched my every movement, was overcome with joy.

The woman took the paper from him, and pretended to read as follows, 'My dear husband, I am well and so are our children. We will soon come to see you and will bring you whatever you wish.' He listened eagerly, and seemed for the instant rejuvenated. Placing the letter over his heart, he thanked me many times, and told me that he had been a sailor in the Imperial Navy, and had been invalided out of the Service and sent to this district. But for thirty-five years he had had no news of his family, which he had left at Reval. Then he cried aloud, 'Where art thou, my pigeon? Art thou at Reval or Riga or Petersburg?' These words reminded me so forcibly of my own similar position that they greatly upset me, and I shed bitter tears."

Shortly after this pathetic encounter, Kotzebue and his guard reached Tobolsk, where the sad and weary dramatist was courteously received by the Governor, who proved himself a sympathetic friend, much to the naïve surprise of Alexander Schulkins. Orders had been received to send the prisoner to some other town in the Tobolsk Government, and Kotzebue was advised to choose Kourgan as having the best climate. He was allowed, however, to remain a fortnight at Tobolsk

to recover from the effects of his journey, and while resting he received visits from other political exiles, and dined with the Governor almost daily, while the best doctor obtainable prescribed remedies suitable for his exhausted condition. During his spare time he drew up a petition to the Tsar—Paul I.—which he entrusted to the Governor, and did not neglect to patronise the opera, of which he speaks with approbation. It was with regret that Kotzebue saw the time for his departure draw near, but his friend the Governor was unable to permit any extension. By this same good Samaritan he was provided with a chest of tea, a stock of medicines, books, letters of introduction to officials at Kourgan, and a servant named Rossi. Rossi was an Italian, but had joined the Russian Navy, and had also joined in a plot to murder his captain and other officers, and present the ship to Turkey. The genial Rossi had been sent to Siberia for twenty years on account of this escapade, and made his living by acting as servant to exiles better off than himself, and by robbing and cheating them with all the grace imaginable. In spite of these little drawbacks, he was a valuable acquisition, for he could turn his hand to anything, from making boots to

cooking an excellent dinner. It was thanks to this cheerful scoundrel that Kotzebue found himself in possession of a good house twenty-four hours after his arrival in Kourgan, "for during that time my clever Rossi had met every one in the town, and had undoubtedly swindled them all."

Housekeeping in Siberia in 1800 was far from expensive, and the frugal German gives some instructive price lists. A pound of bread cost one kopeck (one farthing), a pound of meat five kopecks, and a chicken the same sum. A rabbit could be had for nothing and, he adds, "the greatest drinker could spend the whole day happily with kwass for one kopeck." The annual keep of two horses amounted to less than thirty roubles! On the other hand, sugar, coffee, and tea were very dear, and "a pack of very bad playing cards" cost seven roubles. But the worthy August followed the Russian proverb—very rarely observed by the Russians themselves—"Save your money for the dark days," and ate so sparingly that he always rose from the table hungry, and found to his surprise that he grew better in health than he had ever been previously during the thirty-nine years of his life. His distractions were the study of Russian, the compilation of his

Memoirs, the society of a Polish exile named Sokoloff, and a game of patience before going to bed, this latter amusement being taken very seriously. "Each evening my success or failure answered the question whether I was ever to see my family. Under ordinary conditions this would have seemed childish, but in my circumstances it acquired such a degree of importance that my night's rest was good or bad according to the response of the oracle." Kotzebue was under no surveillance, and was on amicable terms with exiles and officials alike. He often went shooting, and his bag consisted of ducks, partridges and crows. No wolves or bears were in that district, and the greatest danger for those who ventured too far from the town lay in the hordes of Khirgis who frequently swept down and abducted an unwary sportsman. Altogether, Kourgan, surrounded by hills upon which wild flowers grew in profusion, was not without its pleasures, even to an exile.

On the seventh of July, while writing his journal, Kotzebue was interrupted by the excited Rossi, who exclaimed that he had some great news to impart. Kotzebue, however, was so accustomed to this as a preface to one of the Italian's little love

affairs that he refused to listen, and continued at his work until he became aware of a great crowd outside, at the head of which was the judge—M. de Gravi—accompanied by a dragoon. The poor exile was unable to move or speak. Was it his release at last, or could it mean removal to a worse place? The kindly judge, with tears of joy running down his cheeks, embraced the stupefied man amid the cheers of the onlookers, and gave him a letter from the Governor of Tobolsk which informed him in affectionate terms that he was now at liberty. But there was sorrow mingled with Kotzebue's happiness. Poor Sokoloff, the Pole, rejoiced in his comrade's fortune, and then wept that he should be once more alone. In a few hours, followed for several miles by the entire population of Kourgan, the impatient Kotzebue drove away. His one idea was to reach his wife as speedily as possible; but it was not until the end of July, after many adventures, that he arrived at Petersburg. There, in the house of a friend, he found his adored Christel, who, according to the fashion of the time, fainted so often at seeing him, and shed so many joyful tears, that one wonders how she had the physical strength soon after to receive the congratulations

of many persons who had heard her history and had interested themselves in her.

Kotzebue's " most remarkable year " was over. He had gone to Siberia, not in chains but in a carriage ; he had met with sympathy and kindness from all, with few exceptions ; he had returned a stronger and a healthier man. For Paul I. and for his successor, Alexander I., he treasured the warmest affection until the day of his untimely death, in 1819, when a Jena student stabbed him in the back in revenge for his ridicule of the " Burschenschaft " movement. He might have lived longer, surrounded by Christel and his babies, at Kourgan

M. L.

SIBERIA AND THE WAR

IT is a strange and surely rather comfortable thought that this present war, in spite of its appalling wastage of human life, its crushing sacrifices of money and material, and its unalloyed horrors, possesses none the less the proverbial silver lining. The colossal cloud-burst which spells disaster to a countryside leaves behind it a leaven of sludge charged with properties which shall change the barest of hills into smiling gardens, invigorating an unnaturally stunted vegetation and a starved soil. Now, something very similar to this is taking place in Siberia to-day, and it is no exaggeration to say that the deluge of war which has overwhelmed Europe has caused a backwash which will transform Siberia from a struggling, casually exploited Russian colony into a thriving, go-ahead country, in every respect the equal, in some respects the superior, of its climatic prototype —Canada. This may sound an extreme statement of the case, but even a cursory study of the

circumstances will go far towards the conviction of the unprejudiced observer, no matter of how sceptical a mould he may be.

Though known as a geographical expression for centuries; though explored and inhabited in such remote regions as the upper waters of the rivers Obi and Irtish as long ago as the reign of Peter the Great; though ever accepted by Russian statesmen as a potential Eldorado, Siberia remained a land of shadow.

To some it was sinister; brave men—pioneers of new thought—gifted with all the faults—or should it be virtues?—of pioneers, determined, impulsive, warm-hearted, erratic, often short-sighted, usually lovable, were forced to make it their home by imperial mandate during long years.

To some it was fascinating as the unknown always is; interminable winters, silence, vast distances, untrodden forests—the appeal of the wild which has peopled the British colonies.

To some, to the major portion of bureaucratic Russia of a century ago, it was a supremely uninteresting appanage of Russia in Europe; the bane of every official who feared that his lot might take him thither in the execution of his

duty. To none did it occur that here lay a neglected area which only wanted the stimulation of immigration and exploitation to develop, and, in place of remaining a numb portion of the body politic, to awake to life and movement, a vigorous and useful limb.

The last decade of the nineteenth century had, however, witnessed a change. Russia—official Russia—had moved. The Trans-Siberian railway had acted on the nerve-centres of the limb, towns had been roused from their lethargy, and there was a general feeling that the dawn was near. That it was delayed was due rather to outside influences than internal volition. True, Germany, with her usual perspicacity, was already arranging to capture the nascent markets, but, as has ever been her policy, her campaign was directed towards the disposal of her own manufactures in preference to the utilisation of Siberia's latent resources. England remained aloof; she was still under the spell of the sensational novelist and the penny-a-line writer, whose stock-in-trade consisted of snow, convicts, wolves and a brutal soldiery.

Then came the war with Japan—for Siberia a blessing, since hundreds of soldiers from the West crossed the Urals to defend the fatherland, and

remained as settlers in the Trans-Baikal districts. But their number was as a drop in the ocean as compared to the territory open to occupation, and for strategic reasons it was urgent that the frontiers, at least, should be well populated. Cossacks there were, but the essential features of permanent colonisation were absent.

Thus arrived the era of assisted immigration which, in the main, has been satisfactory, though at great cost to the Imperial treasury. Certainly no complaints could legitimately have been levelled at the methods employed to ensure the newcomers the best possible chances in their fresh venture. Apart from land grants and free transit, apart from farm equipment, machinery and buildings, practical assistance in all branches of agriculture was forthcoming from a paternal Government. In fact the colonists were dry-nursed to a degree which, in the opinion of many fitted to judge, was liable to destroy initiative. Naturally, also, there were failures. Some sections of the country were found, too late, to be unsuitable for settlement owing to the swampy character of the ground; some parties of immigrants (as far as possible groups were always recruited from the same villages) lost heart, suffered from

unendurable home hunger, and gave up the struggle. But on the whole the scheme was successful, only there was not enough of it.

Remember that Canada, prior to the war, was touting for fresh blood not from Great Britain only, but from Europe in general, that same Canada which has long been in process of evolution, and which now boasts of one of the most progressive civilisations of the world. Then recall the fact that Siberia has hitherto lacked the vitalising stimulus of foreign immigration, and has been dependent solely upon parent effort. Her immigrants have been agriculturists, pure and simple. The element of the artisan, the constructive element, that is to say, has been lacking.

Ever has that been the case with Russia. Her people are of the land, and though they have conquered millions of acres with the plough and the spade, unaided, that method does not spell the rapid advance which has distinguished the newly-opened regions of the Canadian West. As time passed the Siberia settlement became the town, and it was then that outside enterprise stepped in and completed the edifice. For its completion was required practical organisation, and the Russian is a theoretician from birth. Hence,

the Danish control of the Siberian butter market, the German control of the grain, the American control of machinery for agricultural purposes, and the British—their control in the future depends literally upon their own determination.

For with the advent of war came a great change, a sudden upheaval, which not only dislocated things as they were, but completely disassociated what had been from what was to be. On that day the endless Siberian steppe heaved a sigh of relief as the Teutonic influence, which had taken all and given nothing, passed for ever from its midst. At no time was there panic as to final issues. There was surmise, certainly, and a reassessment of resources. The harvest was swiftly and effectively garnered by the women-folk. Immense troop movements in no wise taxed the food supply. There was enough and to spare for all—in fact the Siberian peasant for the first time tasted his own butter and approved of it. Then commenced the arrival of strangers from afar —prisoners. They came not in hundreds, but in thousands, and the manner of their reception was in fullest accordance with the Russian tradition, which is most effectively translated into the common phrase *parcere subjectis*.

Meanwhile, the provincial governors had issued proclamations expressly stating the fact that these quondam enemies were not Germans—that they were, in fact, first and second cousins of their own by nationality, who had been pressed into the firing line against their kinsmen by force majeure. And the proclamations concluded with appeals to the inherent kindness and sympathy of the moujik to treat these uninvited guests as he would himself like to be treated under similar circumstances.

A motley crowd they were. Ruthenians and Poles from Galicia, Slovaks and Southern Slavs from Hungary, they were making acquaintance for the first time with territory to which, by sentiment and nationality, they were allied. As prisoners they were under no obligation to work; they were, so to speak, boarded out, their expenses being defrayed by the authorities. If they liked to work, however, they could, and thereby could earn money. That was the position, and thus was the seed sown. The strangers quickly discovered that their speech was of a common origin, and that, without much difficulty, not only could they make themselves understood, but that it was a milestone on the road towards friendship.

And thence it was borne in upon their intelligence that they were more literally at home in this distant land than they had ever been under the domination of Austria. Speedily they grew to understand, respect, and appreciate the innate kindness which is the hall-mark of the Siberian peasantry. Even the vast steppes seemed to smile a welcome to them and bid them dwell upon the future rather than on the past, and in truth no country can be more compelling in its loveliness than Siberia in the early summer. What wonder then, that almost subconsciously these men dropped into their allotted niches as though of the country born!

Now they were, many of them, industrialists. They had learned trades, they could read and write, they were hardy, and, in fact, they had the makings of ideal colonists. That is precisely what they have become. Without difficulty they found congenial and remunerative employment. With zest they occupied themselves with the tasks of those called away for military service, and by their industry they have already actually established fresh undertakings of precisely that character for which the need was most urgent. To give an instance: at a large mine near

Pavlodar, no fewer than five hundred of these prisoners, so-called, are being employed, and the manager, a Briton incidentally, besides being enthusiastic over their steadiness, has been enabled by their skill to start a new and complicated process of ore extraction.

Thus it is no exaggeration, speaking broadly, to say that these victims of the war have provided just that complement to the existing Siberian population which was, to a great extent, lacking. A vast industrial army—its numbers must be enormous—has entered Siberia for Siberia's good, an army which intends to remain, which is thoroughly happy and content, and which, after the war, will connect up the broken threads of its family life and will bring its kindred to its new home. That will spell a fresh acquisition of excellent material and a corresponding advance of the clock as regards Siberian development. Had Austria wished to prove a friend indeed to Russia, she could scarcely have devised a more happy solution of Siberia's industrial problem.

A. L.

RUSSIA *

OUR cheery pessimists have been enjoying themselves of late. They have had the satisfaction of disproving the fallacies enunciated by their optimistic opponents, and they have not hesitated to avow that, in their opinion, Russia is now a broken reed. True, the majority of these critics have no acquaintance with that country, whilst others who may have paid it a fleeting visit have evidently failed to understand Slavdom in the least. But it is an undeniable fact that a spirit of depression is abroad, a depression founded upon an insufficient comprehension of actual facts. Hence it may not be without interest, briefly to review the domestic factors governing the ultimate result of the Russo-German combat, and if these are weighed in unprejudiced fashion the pessimists will be forced to admit that their premises are founded upon misconception.

* Written September, 1915.

Broadly speaking, the fate of Russia depends upon three separate considerations: (*a*) men, (*b*) material, and (*c*) morale as applied to the nation as a whole. It will be convenient to consider each of these points seriatim.

Consideration (*a*) can be dismissed with a minimum of comment. Whatever else may happen, Russia will never suffer from a dearth of men, now or in the future. She possesses a population of approximately 171,000,000, of whom a shade over a half are males. The exact figures are 99·6 women to every 100 men. It is, therefore, fairly obvious that from the eighty-five odd million men no shortage of excellent fighting material need be anticipated, and that a wastage of a million or two need not be viewed in the light of an overwhelming disaster. Of all the countries in Europe, Russia, with an average increase of 16·5 births over deaths per 1000 annually, is the most fruitful, and, unlike the Central Empires, the after effects of her male wastage will be comparatively insignificant. The figures quoted represent an annual excess of births over deaths of a million and a half, and promise approximately a 50 per cent. increase of the race within the next half century. This affords some idea of Russia's

virility, and is sufficient proof of her ability to carry on the war indefinitely, provided no hitch occurs over the other two points which have been mentioned.

* * * * *

Turning now to (*b*) material, the position is not so clear. At the outbreak of the war Russia was as unprepared as her Allies, and was, moreover, in a state of military and industrial transition. Her armies were recovering from the Japanese venture, that is to say, the lessons then learnt had been absorbed, but the full value of their absorption was yet to come. Industrially, Russia was developing her resources leisurely. That these resources were fabulous was common knowledge, but it needed this war to force home the realisation that even dormant treasures must be mobilised with the nation to ensure victory. Once mobilised, an operation which will occupy time, Russia will be self-supporting to the extent that, for practical purposes, she will be independent of outside aid. With a good harvest—this year's has been excellent—no question of food supply need trouble her. Rather is the difficulty of exporting the surplus the fly in the ointment.

Her mineral wealth is varied and inexhaustible, more especially in the direction of ores necessary for munitions. For instance, her copper output has increased yearly, and she is now practically self-supporting in that particular. Her iron deposits are limitless. Nickel, hitherto one of the only metals not found in Russia, has recently been most opportunely discovered in considerable quantity, while no other country possesses so much manganese. Further, three rare metals, thorianite, uranium, and wolfram, all used in steel processes, have been mined for some time past, and it must be added that all this mineral wealth is situated in regions far from the scene of hostilities.

As for coal, one of the principal difficulties hitherto has been lack of labour—that is, of skilled colliery labour—but that obstacle is not insurmountable. Cotton, Russia obtains in ever-increasing quantities from Central Asia, and though she imports some also, she could certainly carry along on her own crops without unduly feeling the pinch. Her oil fields are so well known as to need no comment.

Hence Russia can be described as independent, once these resources are utilised to the full. But

their practical utilisation will bear fruit in a direction quite unexpected by Germany. In other words, her previous reliance upon many German manufactured imports will disappear, for those artisans who are in the making now, and who are being used for the manufacture of munitions will remain, after the war, a nucleus of skilled labour, from the lack of which Russia has long suffered.

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Within the limits of this article it is impossible further to pursue the subject, but, in point of fact, this enforced dependence of Russia upon her own resources will produce lasting effects, and, by changing a species of creative apathy into industrial initiative, will prove actually beneficial. Therefore it may be asserted without fear of contradiction that any German hopes of forcing her enemy into such material straits as would completely cripple her and drive her to sue for peace are doomed to disappointment. Hence there remains only (*c*) her morale, or the strength of the national determination. Here again Germany appears to have been ill-advised and badly informed. This war is a popular war. It is being fought by the people, and is the expression of the national will. For an explanation

one need only turn to history and to the psychological aspect of Teutonism as opposed to Slavism. The solution is writ plain.

Long before the era of modern Russia the Teutonic yoke had been felt and cordially disliked. As early as 1650, during the reign of Alexis Mikhailovich, the son of the first Romanoff Czar, anti-German riots occurred in Moscow. It must be emphasised that these particular disturbances were not anti-foreign, but specifically anti-German, so deeply had Slav dislike of the Teuton eaten into the national soul. Then came Krijanich, the Serb, apostle of Slav freedom and unity, an enthusiastic follower of that school of thought which was built upon mistrust of the Germans. His was the leaven of anti-Teutonism which subtly permeated the Russian people, but which found no reflection in its rulers until a century and a half later.

National aspirations, as expressed by the wish of the masses, received no answer from those in authority. On the contrary, they were obscured by an extravagant trust in German efficiency which led to an attempt to graft upon Slav idealism Teuton materialism. The result was failure in every direction. The emancipation of

the serfs was an encouragement towards the formation of nationalism, and a corresponding development of popular feeling took place. German influence came to be bitterly resented by the peasantry—by no means so dunderheaded as extremists of both parties of political thought, reactionaries and revolutionaries, wished the world to believe. But at that moment means were lacking to translate such a sentiment into action. The popular will of Russia was mute, though the sap necessary for its continued vitality was there. Moreover, since this sap could not expand upwards, it spread snake-like through the roots of the tree politic. That sap was actually a concrete hatred of Germany. The repeated struggles of Russia on behalf of the Eastern Christians were somewhat analogous to the present war. Both made appeal to religious sentiment, both became virtually crusades. The Japanese war called up no profound feelings of patriotism. Japan had never interfered with Slav ideals. There was none of that stolid determination which is the true basis of enthusiasm—that wine without sparkle which is the more potent for its quiescence. Day by day that wine matured until its vintage became one beyond the

price of kings. It was tapped in August, 1914! It was no longer a Government which declared for war, but a people numbering one hundred and seventy millions. It was a war which wiped out all differences of creed and colour, a war which cemented every one of Slav blood, a war which represented a cry of millions after three centuries of Teuton domination. And against the will of millions what can machine-made power accomplish? Nothing.

That is why Bismarck feared Russia.

A. L.

"TANIA"

TANIA was seventeen, dark-haired, grey-green eyed, and undeniably attractive. She had passed through the "Gymnasium," and, with the exception of desultory lessons in French and music, was free to fill up her time much as she chose. Her intellectual equipment was exceptionally good, although her education had been of that miscellaneous character dear to the Russian, and which is the enemy of systematised effort. In fact, never have I met any one who had managed to cram into a pretty head such a varied assortment of odd knowledge within so short a span of time. But with her attainments in that direction I am not concerned. Rather was it her attitude towards life in general which interested me, and since, with experience, I grew to discover that she was by no means exceptional amongst girls of her own age and standing in Russia, she has remained in my memory as a type.

Moreover, as the girl of to-day is the mother

of to-morrow, and unconsciously transmits certain elementary traits to her children, in studying a nation it is of value to know something of its womanhood. At the same time, it must be said that Tania possessed a strong personality of her own which, to some extent, coloured her actions; but her mentality followed the regular contours of general thought.

Brought up in a comfortable and most refined home, with a mother who watched over her with a solicitude which at moments was resented, and with a father who adored her, she had contrived to imbibe enough worldly wisdom liberally to endow a woman of thirty. Whence she had obtained it I know not; perhaps from her associates, perhaps from books. But, be that as it may, it had carried with it a considerable amount of that assurance which in itself is something of a protection to a girl in everyday life. And, no doubt, it was partially this which had helped her to arrive at a state of peculiar independence of thought and action. Mentally and materially she moulded her conduct to suit her own theories without any reference to tradition, social codes, or Mrs. Grundy. It had inbred in her a spirit of self-reliance—one might almost say it amounted

to courage—which found expression even in the trivialities of daily routine. Having nothing special with which to occupy herself, she had developed an intense restlessness; mentally she dreamed dreams of activity in many spheres, physically she always wanted to be, to use a colloquialism, "on the go." Living in Kieff, and knowing that her mother hated travelling while, in addition, money was not too plentiful, it puzzled me at first to hear her criticise Paris, Berlin, and Geneva, evidently with first-hand knowledge. Then one day she explained to me her *modus operandi* in Russia, which presumably she followed on her foreign expeditions.

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She had been discussing a proposed visit to Petrograd, a city she much affected, and with her usual directness she came at once to the question of finance. "First of all I must find fifty roubles somehow," she said. "Papasha's books, which I sold from his library last time, he missed later, and he was so cross that I shan't do it again. But my bicycle, that is quite different. It is broken, certainly, but my friend Anatole will mend it for me, and he says it is worth sixty roubles. That will be more than

sufficient." I demurred, remembering the fare, somewhere in the neighbourhood of that figure for a first-class ticket one way. " Oh, but you don't understand," she answered, petulantly, " I travel third-class, and, upon my word, I like it much better in some respects."

I must explain that, apart from the physical strain involved in a long Russian journey under these conditions—the carriages being devoid of any upholstery—the propinquity of the moujik is likely to become a trial even to those whose skins are tough and whose sensibilities are to some extent blunted. For a woman of refinement one would expect it to be a purgatory, but such were evidently not Tania's feelings.

Accompanied by her sister, who completely shared her views, a large bottle of eau de Cologne and a thick veil, the latter presumably to keep her hair tidy and to ward off the inquisitive glances of curious strangers, she undertook the thirty-six hours' journey without the slightest qualms. Her luggage apparently consisted chiefly of food ; a packet of tea and a few lumps of sugar, a home-made cake of substantial proportions, some apples, and a box of sweets, this last not destined to see the end of the trip. *En*

route, any washing operations were performed in the second-class, at the cost of a microscopic tip to the conductor. Arrived at their destination, these two girls took a room in some quiet hotel, paying possibly two and a half roubles a night, and, with a wave of her hand, Tania told me, "then our expenses were practically over." "But food," I argued. "You must have eaten?" "Yes, of course, we must. Had we not Matoushka's cake and the fruit for dessert? And, naturally, we got a samovar, which costs only five copecks, so we managed quite comfortably."

Any spare cash there might be was certainly not to be expended upon such frivolities as restaurants!

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Olga, the sister, had a terrible penchant for pretty clothes, while Tania revelled in shoes and stockings, both of which she undoubtedly hoped in a perfectly natural and harmless way might be admired as she sauntered up the Nevsky. I do not think that theatres or concerts, churches or museums claimed much of her attention. The thrill was to see new people and strange buildings, to feel in the middle of things, which she did not in Kieff, to imagine that she was a necessary cog in the great wheel of empire.

Therein, I suspect, lay the fascination. Fate had so ordained it that her *rôle* in life would probably be a quiet and usual one; marriage to an officer or a tchinovnik, residence in a provincial town, and the upbringing of possible children. That, to her ardent nature, spelt nothing short of ennui, the rusting of wonderful mental powers, and the conversion of life into mere existence.

Undoubtedly it was this same feeling which, about 1875, was responsible for the Narodechestvo, broadly translated, the "among the people" movement, when students of both sexes donned the garments of toil and went amongst the working class to live. Whatever it resulted in finally, at its inception it was intrinsically the outcome of a restless curiosity to discover the status of the other half of the world. A desire was there to bridge the social chasm, the effect of which would be, though at the time they scarcely realised it, to knit up the Slav people into a composite whole. It was, in fact, an unconscious expression of that nationalism which has been dormant or suppressed for so long until the present war allowed it to come to the surface.

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As so often happens with good intentions which

are treated unsympathetically, and in this case unduly harshly, the harmless movement grew in intensity, spread with rapidity, and degenerated through discontent, into open terrorism, when it had to be ruthlessly checked. But the point I wish to make is that here was the same feeling, only not manifested in the same direction owing to a variety of circumstances, cropping up in my little friend Tania. Its manifestation in this case was towards the satisfaction of mere childish whims, but it possessed precisely similar basic characteristics. There was the independence of thought and action, the virility of imagination, the courage—and it takes a deal—to go and see for oneself, the same carelessness for personal comfort, and the same total disregard for surface conventionality.

There is nothing unwomanly in it; on the contrary, it lends fascination to its possessors. And that it is not dead but merely, so to speak, hibernating, speaks well for the future of Russia. It is an elemental force which acute and far-sighted statesmanship can use, and which, turned into the proper channels, can make of Slavdom a power intensely conscious of its own nationality and intensely jealous of foreign infusion threatening

to become permanent in character. They have tasted those fruits in the German supremacy of the past and found them bitter.

The Russia of the future will be Russian; so says the young thought of the nation, and it was Tania who taught me.

A. L.

KIEFF

IN some respects it is unfortunate for Russia that the average traveller, passing cursorily through her domains, is only too prone to think of her in terms of Petrograd, Moscow, and Warsaw. The first is blatantly cosmopolitan in aspect and thought; the second has become so impregnated with commercialism that the romance of its past is, to a great extent, eclipsed by factory and mill; while the last never could be aught else than a foreign city situated within Russian territory.

But since these are the three cities most generally visited by the casual tourist, they are responsible to a large degree for the impressions of this vast country which are so often incorrect or misleading. True, to understand the character of a nation something more than vague generalities is requisite. But given the necessary sympathy—this a first essential—there is much to be learned from Kieff, most Russian of all cities and the

mother of the Slav Empire. Hers was the womb which gave Russia birth. Hers were the lips which taught her offspring the elemental truths of Christianity. Hers were the arms within which her children of yore found sanctuary. And even to-day the incessant clamour of modern industrialism is here hushed: existing, it is subservient to the sweeter call of motherhood. In spite of age-long trials, in spite of invasions, sackings, and burnings, in spite of internal dissensions and the clash of divergent creeds, she has retained the reverence and love of those she bore.

And hence it is that Kieff is, in a word, the mirror of the Russian nation and speaks of the soul of the people as no other city could. What Rome is to Catholicism, Kieff is to Orthodoxy. In some respects the bond is stronger. With the Slav, religion is a daily—some might almost say an hourly—necessity, the like of which finds scarcely a parallel amongst other followers of Christianity, and which, because of its simplicity and the depth of its intensity, is often misunderstood by foreign observers. The veneration of child for mother is inherent in human nature. It may be that misfortune has denied the knowledge of parent to child, but, notwithstanding,

the love and veneration exist. So it is with the Russian moujik. Fate may never vouchsafe to him the opportunity of doing reverence to his spiritual mother at the shrines of Kieff, but instinctively his heart is drawn towards her, and he treasures an ikon brought to him from the Lavra, or monastery, of Pechersk as he would some relic of the mother who gave him birth. Therein lies the charm of the city. Day after day one can watch the homage of thousands in its churches; one can mingle with its pilgrims from afar; and, almost unconsciously, one can absorb something of the temperament which sways these people.

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I remember talking to an educated Englishwoman who had spent a considerable time in Petrograd. I had announced my intention of passing a few months in Kieff, and her surprised remark was: "What on earth will you find to do with yourself there?" To such intelligences the riddle of Russia will remain for all time insoluble. To enjoy Kieff, to grasp the meaning of its churches, its pilgrims, and its street life, to ignore its apparent defects, materialism must be banished. Its *café chantants*, its noisy restaurants,

its hotel orchestras are merely incidents—merely rather depressing reminders of the strangers within its gates. And it is precisely because these same strangers, as they sip their coffee in the lounge of the Continental Hotel or dawdle fatuously through the dim cloisters of the Cathedral of St. Sophia, imagine that they are "doing" Kieff, that they leave it certainly no wiser and probably without being in the slightest degree enlightened as to its significance.

As a town its situation is exquisite. It must have as many hills as Rome, and its streets are famous for the horse-chestnuts which frame them. On a giant bluff overlooking the sluggish, mud-coloured Dnieper, with its background of plain and pine forest, stands the heart of Kieff, the heart of Orthodoxy, and hence the heart of Russia. This is the Lavra of Pechersk, or the monastery of catacombs, wherein are preserved the mortal remains of those early hermits, giants of the Russian Church—Hilarion, Anthony, and Theodosius, as well as of the famous historian Nestor. In the words of the latter, in describing its origin, "Many monasteries have been founded by princes and nobles and by wealth but they are not such as those which have been founded by tears and

fasting and prayer and vigil." Thus Kieff, the mother, lovingly cherishes the cradle of Russian history. And it is worthy of remark that the monastery stands in the very centre of those fortifications which form the city's defence, national faith and military strength finding concrete expression the one within the other.

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It is here that the foreigner should stand and muse. Here are pilgrims from all parts of the empire. Some have begged their way hither and will trust to the same method of finding their way home. There is a complete absence of that frothy sentimentality which passes muster with some as religious fervour. Rather is the general attitude one of a devotion shorn of gaudy externals, but disclosed so naturally as to permit of outward manifestations becoming in themselves a normal accompaniment. These wanderers are assisting at a declaration of faith which binds the nation more strongly than foreign critics are apt to discern. It is precisely this ingrained belief in a Divinity working towards certain ends which is the key of the Russian character, and which, elusive as it is, may occasionally be recognised. It is the unknown "*X*" of the Slav temperament

which baffles the skill of the agitator, the rhetoric of the politician, and the diagnosis of the psychologist. It is the paradox of all paradoxes, for it makes the revolutionary a supporter of Czardom, the schismatic a supporter of Orthodoxy, and the criminal a seeker after truth. Behind it lies a feeling of intense nationalism; an instinct that Slavdom has a destiny to fulfil; that in the Church lies the visible expression of that instinct; and that the sun shall one day dawn upon a Russia which shall be Russian. Therein lies the call of Kieff.

Sacrilegious hands have been laid upon her, but she has survived; the heart of the mother still beats. And a whisper has once again spread through the Russian land that alien foes may strike at her. German gold and German intrigue may have suborned allegiance in Poland and the Baltic Provinces. The paths towards Riga and Warsaw may have been indicated by traitors. But an advance towards Kieff, the Holy, offers a different perspective.

Common instinct should surely warn even a Teuton that there is danger in desecrating the most sacred sentiments of a huge nation. If the German scourge ever reaches the Kievan

plains, if German shells ever batter the Pechersk Lavra, if a single German grenadier ever sullies the sanctity of its cloisters—then the War Lord will meet a nation blood-mad, which shall tear him from his throne and cast him to perdition.

Kieff, mother of Russia, fairest jewel in the Imperial diadem, what destiny awaits you? To know you, to understand you, to love you, is to know, understand, and love your children!

A. L.

RIVER TRAVEL IN RUSSIA

WINDING through the Russian Empire are its vast rivers. They empty into the White Sea and the Black, into the Baltic and the Caspian, into the Arctic and Pacific Oceans. They flow through plain and steppe, through forest-land and wheatfields, past great cities and humble villages. Their courses are sometimes obstructed by sandbanks or blocked by rapids, but they form in summer the smoothest, cleanest, and most comfortable highways of the Tsar. There is no dust, and one's nerves are never at a tension as in a swaying, creaking post-cart. A slight breeze always mitigates the heat of the noonday sun, and the baffled mosquitoes satiate their hunger on travellers by land.

Every one uses the river steamers, rich and poor, priest and merchant, for the fares are so inconsiderable that they are within reach of all. On the lower deck is the third-class accommodation.

It is beautifully primitive, consisting only of tiers of shelves, one above the other, where "Ivan" and his uncles and his cousins and his aunts stow themselves away at night, and where they sit in the daytime, their legs dangling, munching a bit of black bread and washing it down with a glass of tea. The air of the place is heavy with the scent of oil from the engines, the smell of food, and the odour of sheepskins. The bow and stern, two uncovered portions of this deck, serve as a sort of club for "Ivan" and his male friends and relatives, his feminine associates usually preferring the congenial warmth within. Perched on the gunwale or on a crate of protesting hens, the men will sit, rolling innumerable cigarettes, chatting or singing, and occasionally casting an inquisitive glance at the first-class passengers on the deck above. I do not think "Ivan" envies these Olympians, but he is invariably devoured with curiosity to see what they are eating and how they take their ease. By an unwritten law the upper deck is not debarred from the moujik until he becomes a source of annoyance, and who could be angry on meeting the long, ruminating stare of a pair of blue eyes set in a tangled mass of hair and beard, while a smiling mouth, revealing a

faultless set of teeth, shows that the starer is prompted only by childish wonder. The dining saloon, with its rows of tables covered with linen and plate, fascinates him. The contents of a cabin arouse his uncovetous interest. He will pass and repass, treading gently in his enormous high boots, until his place is taken by another—equally harmless and equally intent.

On most river steamers the first-class accommodation is forward on the upper deck, while the second-class is aft. There are cabins for one, two, or four persons, lighted by electricity, with a stationary washing-stand in the corner and with a window supplied with glass, blind, and sliding shutter. On some steamers there is also a bath-room. The second-class cabins and saloon differ only from the first in a slight hardness of seats and couches and a little negligence concerning the purity of the table-linen. Bed-linen there is none in any cabin. It is this obligation of taking one's bed literally with one when travelling in Russia which causes luggage to assume grotesque and bulky shapes, and one summer day, as I sat in my cabin on the *Felikitata* (named so after the owner's daughter) and surveyed my many packages I laughed aloud. How many self-respecting

persons at home would for one moment have contemplated undertaking a journey with such an outfit? Yet mine was the result of months of experience. There was my birch-bark basket from Archangel, commonly known as "Little Mary," which contained tea and the wherewithal to make it, as well as food of various kinds. There was my roll of bedding—a woollen sleeping-sack, pillows, pillow-cases, and towels—and a hideous but stout valise, termed for some abstruse reason the "Jew bag," made of Russian hide and studded with shiny nails. My laughter attracted two little girls with neat kerchiefs over their tightly braided hair, who peered in at me to see the cause of my mirth, and, finding nothing remarkable except myself, remained peering. "Go away!" said I when I had had enough; "Go away! Be off!" Giggling they retreated a few steps, only to return like flies to a honey-pot until I pulled down the blind, almost grazing their snub noses, and went on deck.

The deck was swarming with intending passengers. Peasants, clutching their luggage and fortified for the trip with long green cucumbers and great loaves of black bread, fought good-naturedly for a place on the gangway, although

each knew that there was time and space for all. Young women, in gay blouses and the latest Polish-American shoes, called to friends already in the second-class to secure a cabin for them, while youths, in high boots and blouses, with belts a foot in width, disdained the usual mode of embarkation and swung themselves across the small gap of open water with conscious pride. Eventually the seething mass was absorbed by the steamer, and the third and final blast from her whistle showed that we were off. Through the open window of the cabin next to my own I saw four Tartar merchants, already veiled in tobacco smoke and absorbed in a game of cards. Beyond their cabin two officers were giving explicit directions to their soldier servants about the forthcoming meal. The inevitable children dashed about, pursued by screams from anxious parents; while one stout magnate, who had evidently already dined and wined, caused endless amusement by switching on and off his electric light instead of ringing his bell.

Soon the noise made by the new arrivals died away into a subdued murmur. The steamer throbbed and quivered rhythmically. We passed slopes covered with dense forest and scattered

villages, where a white church stood out conspicuous amongst the unpainted, weather-beaten houses. Presently came a warning whistle, and a sailor, unceremoniously pushing aside a cluster of peasants in the bow, seized a long pole, painted in alternate white and black rings, and plunged it into the water. We were approaching shallows. Again and again the pole was thrust over the side and the depth of the river was called in a chanting sing-song to a waiting figure above. "Piat polovinoi," "shest," "syem" (five and a half, six, seven), and then a long call, the exact words of which I could not distinguish, which evidently meant "no sounding." Another whistle, the long pole was laid in its place, and the danger was over. Nothing is more deceptive than a Russian river. It looks so deep and still that it is difficult to realise that close to the surface lurks sand ready to clutch the hull of a steamer and hold it fast for many hours, and that the current is sufficient to propel huge timber rafts at a fair rate of speed. We passed many of these rafts, with their log-huts in which live the woodsmen during the days their charges float down stream to their destination. Sometimes a puffing tug had the strings of logs in tow, but usually the

only motive power was the river, while an occasional adjustment of a mammoth rudder served to keep the course. Our third-class passengers would shout a word of greeting as we slipped by, or impart a little news of the outer world to these men of the forest, to whom the rise and fall of empires mattered not one whit so long as they safely reached their journey's end.

When I entered the dining-saloon for dinner I found it already occupied. The four Tartars had torn themselves from their cards and were making equally good play with knives and forks. The two officers were luxuriously dining *à la carte*, and a bottle of champagne stood snugly between them. Near my table was a Forestry official, his wife and five children, who all gazed in wide-eyed wonder at the foreigner. "The foreigner" immediately distinguished herself by being unable to read the menu, but only those who have wrestled with "Russian as she is wrote" on river steamers will appreciate my difficulty. The steward and I agreed that the scribe responsible for the bill of fare had missed his vocation and had been intended for a caricaturist of renown. I solved the puzzle by ordering the first, third, and fifth items on the list and waited to see what

would be the result, my every word and action being followed with minute attention by the Forester, his spouse, and his offspring. The scrutiny was becoming embarrassing, when he leaned forward and suggested that I was a stranger. I agreed. A German, perhaps? "No," I said emphatically. Then English, possibly? I assented and he looked triumphant as though he had known it all the time and had led up to it with diplomacy. The usual questions followed: Was it my first visit to Russia? Did I like the country? Was I travelling on business? Where was I going? I answered all these, and in my turn asked what I should find at the small town which was my destination. "Nothing," he replied; "it is a dull place. There is nothing there but——," and he used a word which I thought meant water-melons. "I agree with you," I answered, "I do not like them and only eat them when they are French." One of the officers choked violently over his champagne, and the four Tartars looked at me with alarmed interest, while the Forester and his family seemed dazed. I felt myself growing very red, for it came to me that he had been talking of men and not of melons. Then every one spoke at once, but the Forester,

wiping tears of mirth from his eyes, announced that after that I could not be English but must be a Samoyede (literally, a "man-eater" in Russian). He was still chuckling over his joke, and mine, when we separated for the night.

Some time in the early hours of the morning I heard the officers disembark. As the sun rose we ran upon a sandbank, but were prodded off with the aid of long poles and much advice. I realised all this dimly through my dreams and woke to find my objective the next stopping-place. Soon I made one of the throng on the gangway. "Goodbye," called the Forester, "I'm so glad you don't want to eat them, for they are rather tough." He beamed and waved his hand. "Dosvidania," chorused the children and the wife. I waved in reply and watched the *Felikitata* disappear. My merry companions had left me. Probably we should never meet again, but every Russian river and every steamer thereon has its charm and its good fellowship.

M. L.

RUSSIA'S NORTHERN GATEWAY—ARCHANGEL

THERE is nothing stately about Archangel. It has neither hills behind nor cliffs in front to give it dignity. The lines of its low wooden houses straggle down to the water from the fringe of stunted pine trees on the edge of the tundra. Its streets, like those of the majority of Russian towns, are disproportionately wide, and their paving stones resemble those in a Cubist painting. It has none of the splendour of Southern Russia, and few traces of the prosperity of Siberia. Yet, in spite of all these drawbacks, it has the charm of homely friendliness. If the time should come when Archangel swarms with tourists and hums with trade, its charm will vanish; but that time is not yet. And meanwhile the childlike fisher folk and hunters still give to it the kindly simplicity so lacking in our boasted civilisation.

Winter piles the snow high in the broad streets

and covers the sea with ice thick enough for the reindeer of the Samoyedes to cross the mouth of the great River Dwina without danger. The sun shows his face reluctantly for but a few hours daily, and Archangel sleeps. There are endless games of cards at the club for the merchants, but the peasants lie on the tops of their stoves and dream until the spring. Then, with April, comes the first sign of life. The ice begins to thaw and crack, and soon the Dwina and the White Sea are full of grinding, heaving floes. The sun shines fiercely, and the buds on the trees swell and break until, with a rush, summer is once more in the land.

Perhaps Bluebeard's castle was here, for nowhere else in the world could one imagine the reply of "Sister Anne" from her watch-tower to the agonised call, "Sister Anne, Sister Anne, what do you see?" of the trembling wife. "I see the sun making dust and the grass growing green," said Sister Anne. Certainly in Archangel I did not need to be a Sister Anne to watch the mud being transformed into clouds of dust, or the leaves on the trees unfolding and the grass growing long and green in the rays of the never-setting sun. The summer is so short that Nature is compelled

to work overtime in order to make a brave showing. And then it is that Archangel rubs its eyes, yawns, stretches itself and wakes. The band in the little park plays merrily until the morning, the *cafés* are thronged with supping humanity, and even the birds, pardonably uncertain of the hour, chirp and twitter in the unnatural light of the "white nights."

It was my good fortune to arrive at Archangel on my first visit when the last of the ice was floating out to sea. The railway station, as is usually the case in Russia, lies some versts from the town (in this instance across the river), as though to discourage the population from ever venturing far afield by depriving them of the sight of puffing engines. In spite of this fact, every class in Russia is adept at travelling, from the poor pilgrims who beg their way to the island monastery of Solovetz, to the Omsk merchants who think nothing of a four-days' journey to Moscow for twelve hours' business. Would any family at Plymouth write to friends just settled at Strathpeffer, "We are delighted to know you are so near us"? Yet that has happened to me in Russia, where eighteen hours in the train is considered trivial. So it does not astonish the

Archangel peasants to see strangers in their midst. They are only curious to know why they have come, and if their interest is timber or fishing. That any one impelled by neither business nor religion should visit them they cannot understand. There was a little maiden, named Sonia, whom I used basely to tempt with sweets until she would perch upon my knee and chatter to me in her unintelligible baby Russian. Her father was the shoemaker to whom I took my shoes, which suffered severely from the Archangel cobble-stones. "Dai ruku," he would say (which means literally "give the paw"), and Sonia would place her little brown hand in mine as thanks for the sticky joys which filled her mouth. Then he would ask me about England: if it was far away; if there were any Russians there; if boots were dear or cheap; and, finally, what brought me to Archangel. During our conversations a small kitten played about with the fallen strips of leather, and Sonia's mother occasionally poked her head through the doorway leading to the kitchen to see that her good man did not waste too much time in empty talk. I am quite sure that he thought me a pilgrim to Solovetz, especially when I asked him where I could buy the silver tokens

which hang on the ikons in the church of Saint Michael the Archangel and in the cathedral.

Only in the provinces of Archangel and Olonetz does one find these naïve religious offerings. It is difficult properly to define them. They are not thanks for favours granted, but are rather hints for the especial saint that a particular favour has been asked. And lest there should be any confusion, the "hint" takes concrete form in the crude shape of cow, horse, child, and even of a broken heart, stamped out in thin silver and suspended by the supplicant with ribbon or string from the frame of the ikon. Good Saint Nicholas or Saint Alexander cannot fail to be touched by these little evidences of faith in their abilities.

The church of Saint Michael the Archangel stands on the water's edge. It looks through a veil of dust in summer over the harbour, where lie ships from all parts of the world loading grain and timber, and across desolate ice and snow in winter. It is so small that it could be placed in one corner of the Kazan Cathedral at Petrograd and remain unnoticed, yet in its very minuteness and the quality of its decorations it is infinitely more appealing than other richer churches.

There is space within its walls for not more than a hundred persons to stand close together. I should not like to venture in under those circumstances, for the northern moujik adds to the odour of his sheepskin the perfume of tresca (dried cod), and, even empty, the church is redolent of it. The cathedral, a larger building, with domes of royal blue freckled with golden stars, is, in this respect, an improvement, and the singing was a surprise to me. Though not to be compared with the glorious harmonies which roll through the great cathedrals of Kieff or Moscow, I wonder how many towns in England of the same size can boast of a choir so trained and true as can this northern port.

Choir boys, however, are the same the world over. They raise their heads, and from their young lips come tones so pure and passionless that it is difficult to realise that, at the same time, their minds are full of impish pranks, and their hands are probably employed in mischief. There was a youthful member of the cathedral choir whose pseudonym was undoubtedly the Russian equivalent of "Pickle." I used to stand where I could watch him at Mass, and I was never disappointed. His hands and face

were unnaturally clean—the work of a devoted mother—and his shock of fair hair showed traces of the home barber, whose stock-in-trade consists of a pudding-basin and a pair of shears. He was always late, thereby bringing down upon him a severe reprimand from the deacon—a thin, irritable individual, whose musical life was not a bed of roses. The reprimand, which he invariably received with a glance of injured innocence, was followed by a voluble excuse which had to be cut short. Then his roving eye would single out an acquaintance of his own age amongst the worshippers. Solemnly his face would be contorted into a series of hideous grimaces, each one more fearsome than the other, until his fascinated victim would break into a loud guffaw, only to be cuffed by an indignant parent. The deacon always knew who was the culprit, and would rap him over the knuckles with a book intended for holier purposes, but I never saw Master Pickle in the least perturbed thereat. His voice was the sweetest of all. It rang, thrilling and sweet, high above the others, and his little, well-scrubbed throat swelled like a lark's. I suppose that they could not do without him, and were obliged to submit to his earthly

failings for the sake of his heavenly voice. But, none the less, I was sorry for the deacon.

Only in the winter do Master Pickle and his friends go to school. When the hot weather comes they play in the park at the far end of the long Troitsky, or poke the little fish which swim aimlessly in the fountain in the "Square"—a word remaining from the time when Archangel was practically an English settlement. In the Square also is the waffle-maker—an impassive Tartar who holds his spade-shaped waffle-iron over a little charcoal brazier until the thin batter is brown and crisp, but not too crisp to be rolled into horns and sold for a kopeck. I confess to a weakness for these sweetened shavings myself, and to an even greater interest in watching the deft fingers which so skilfully turn the cumbersome iron, while the band plays and the *élite* of Archangel greet each other and exchange gossip or thrilling domestic detail.

Every good housewife goes herself to the market. Practically everything can be found there, from the silver "hints" of which I have spoken, to eggs and butter, from birch-bark shoes to homespun carpets. Birch-bark shoes are the foot-gear of the north, except in winter, when high felt

boots are substituted—shapeless monstrosities, but very warm, and sometimes decorated with a red and blue design by their owners. There, too, are the birch-bark baskets of all sizes, giant hampers such as the peasants carry, and little useless boxes carved in the dark winter days by the warm stove. I had set my heart on a hamper, and bought it for such a small sum that I am afraid to mention it lest I should not be believed. Then I decided to buy a padlock, not wishing to trust to the stick which "Ivan" usually thrusts through the two loops of the basket to keep it shut. Naturally, padlocks were to be had in the market, so I made my way to a booth where wooden boxes studded with brass nails, fish hooks, and other heterogeneous articles were being sold by a solemn individual whose beard was worthy of a patriarch. Furtively consulting my dictionary for the unaccustomed word, I demanded a "jaba," to be met with a stare of blank surprise and the question, "How could we possibly sell such a thing here?" "But I see them," I retorted; "are they not for sale?" Following my pointing finger the vendor smiled and then laughed. I had made a mistake, it was evident. Again I consulted my dictionary and then I

understood. I had asked an ironmonger to sell me a paddock! I am sure nothing had so pleased him since he first set up his store, and his long beard wagged with merriment in which I joined.

I still have my padlock and my birch-bark basket. The latter has been patched on one corner with adhesive plaster; it has fallen from troikas into muddy autumn roads; it has been packed too full for due consideration of its outlines. But I would not part with it. To me it still retains something of the atmosphere of homely, happy Archangel.

M. L.

WARSAW: A RETROSPECT

WARSAW in August lies languidly above the Vistula, gasping in the heat or shivering in the torrential rains. It is neither of the East nor of the West. It lacks the vivid splashes of colour, the picturesque corners of the Orient, and it cannot boast of the trim repose of the Occident. Among cities it is a mongrel.

I can picture it now as it appeared to me the day I first drove from the Praga Station across the Alexander Bridge, with its endless procession of slow-moving carts. Low, grey houses with tiled roofs, a rusty jumble of buildings which the Governor-General called his palace, ill-paved streets smothered in dust, a noisy crowd sombrely dressed, trams, cabs, and waggons, and over all the golden dome of St. Alexander Nevsky; this was Warsaw, formerly beloved of Thaddeus and Poniatovski!

Each city in the world has a note of its own for those who have ears to hear. There is the sonorous roar of London, the shrill hum of New York, the clear, high soprano of Paris; but Warsaw's note is a raucous falsetto, as when a little newsboy's tired voice cracks and splits with his final effort. There are many sounds which go to make up the whole—the twang of the Jews, the high-pitched intonation of the Poles, the purring mutter of the Russians, and the shriek of the trams as they come to a grinding stop. It is an insistent note, difficult to ignore and irritating to endure. But Warsaw is not a restful city, even though there are so many holidays that one would suppose the inhabitants preferred a life of ease to driving good bargains in shops and offices. These very holidays show in some degree the unrest of the people as no other means so subtly could. It may be a Russian religious holiday; all Russian shops are closed, but the Poles and Jews display a feverish activity. The next day is upon the Polish calendar as a holiday of obligation; the various shop doors bearing Polish names are hermetically sealed, while Jews and Russians go on their way unheeding. Then comes the turn of the Israelite, and all day long his shuttered

windows bespeak the fact that he too is conscious of religious rites which must be observed without the distraction of commerce.

Highly laudable in theory, it is borne in upon the spectator that in practice there is a subconscious desire on the part of each race to irritate the other by tiny pinpricks of superiority.

"We hear from Petersburg," said the Polish newspapers of Warsaw in 1912, "that the Orthodox cathedral of St. Alexander Nevsky in Warsaw has recently been consecrated." This was the Polish pinprick in return for the erection of a schismatic church in a Catholic city. Towering above every building in Warsaw, luring every eye by its magnificence, the great cathedral is a landmark for miles around. Its golden domes shimmer in the sun, its bells ring out above the scream of the streets. It is emblematic of Russia, rich, unyielding, and dominant. Nowhere in the world is the gulf between Catholicism and Orthodoxy so manifest as it is in Poland—a gulf created by national prejudice rather than by spiritual necessity. For the Warsaw Pole combines the intolerance of childhood with the querulousness of old age. He dreams the dreams of childhood and then sinks back with the painful consciousness

that they are only phantoms. Then it is he becomes querulous.

When I think of him in the abstract I have a vision of Vladislas. I can see his narrow frame with its sloping shoulders, I can hear Chopin's Funeral March played by his stumbling fingers, always breaking down in the same place, and I would know his light, almost mincing, step among thousands of footfalls. Never was there a more uncomfortable person than the good Vladislas! He was so poor that it made one's heart ache, and he was so proud that one longed to slap him. The weeks I spent in Warsaw almost resolved themselves into a series of dinners, at which first one and then the other played host. For he refused to be under an obligation; he scented charity with the facility of a bloodhound on the trail; he invented a hundred ingenious ways to pay off an indebtedness, and it was hopeless to attempt to mislead him. A gentleman by birth, he had spent his early years in a purely decorative official position, and he had never recovered from the shock given him by the Russian authorities when they told him that they no longer required his services.

Poor Vladislas! I am quite sure that he had

been utterly incapable of routine work and had always been entirely charming in his incapacity. But he had been roused from one form of dream to plunge into another—the regeneration of Poland. I still treasure a manuscript of the Polish national hymn copied out surreptitiously by him from a smuggled page of music, and a little book of Polish proverbs which he had laboriously translated into English in order, as he said, to make us better known to one another. One of these proverbs, "Do not make your nose blush for the sins of your mouth," will ever be a lasting joy to me, though Vladislas thought it merely moral and not in the least amusing. He had no sense of humour. I wonder if he knows that his beloved hymn can now be sung in public without let or hindrance, and if he and his few treasures are safe in what he used to call "Deep Russia"? I hope so, and that he may live to see some of his dreams come true.

If the Kaiser and his troops were not striding down the Novi Sviat and the Marshalskovska, Warsaw at this moment would be sitting in *cafés* or gardens—the part of Warsaw, that is, which does not own a country villa or cannot afford to go even further afield. I wonder what has

become of the red-cheeked boy at the *Café* Empire who used to cut slices of black bread behind the "zakouski" (*hors d'œuvre*) counter with the regularity of a machine. It was always a puzzle to me how his cheeks kept so red and round in spite of his woefully late hours. He had a faun's pointed ears and quaint, slanting eyes. I always used to smile at him when I dined or supped there, and he would tuck his chin bashfully into the collar of his black cotton blouse and grin shyly at his loaf of bread. He was a great friend of mine, although we never spoke. I should hate to think that he had fallen into German hands!

Of all the *cafés* and restaurants I preferred the gay "Empire" and the dignified Hôtel de l'Europe, where in the old days so many Polish plots were hatched and which happily has escaped the general attention of the tourist. Its most recent plot, however, had nothing to do with politics, and had its culmination in its stately dining-room. There had been a strike among the waiters, and their demand was that they should be addressed as "Pani" (Sir) by customers. The managers of all the hotels discussed the matter, which threatened to bring about a serious crisis in hotel life, and met at dinner at the Europe. A rumour

grew that the waiters would win their point, confirmed by the frequent use of the word "Pani" by the diners. Then the thunderbolt fell. "We have decided to consent to your terms," said the managers, "but you understand that it is impossible to tip a waiter who considers himself so superior that he must be called 'Sir' by those he serves."

The collapse of the strike was complete and instantaneous, and Warsaw waiters still answer to "Hi," or to any loud cry, though I trust that they will not have time thoroughly to master the word "Kellner." The Poles are only good linguists when they choose!

I do not think the Germans will patronise the Franciskanska. There, and in the network of streets, alleys, and courts which lead from it, lives the major portion of the Jewish population. There the signs are in Yiddish, and outside the shops sit enormously fat women with their own hair modestly covered by a hideous wig of seaweed. Old men, with faces reminiscent of the prophets, and youths with red hair and pale, sly eyes barter and sell or teach a horde of children in suffocating rooms crawling with vermin. It is not wise to venture far from the beaten track

off the Franciskanska. I remember going with my husband and a camera on a search for the possibly picturesque. We penetrated through noisome passages, where dogs barked and women shouted at us words we could not comprehend, to a market-place. Our approach was the signal for ugly looks and significant gestures with knives. Deciding to ignore them we kept on, but the shower of offal which then met us was more than we had bargained for and we were obliged to retreat.

The Jew of Warsaw is not progressive, and still wears the cap and long coat (the jarmulka and the halat) discarded by his brothers in other lands. When he can, he brings his hair in a curl over each ear until it joins with his beard. There is also a certain funeral rite, too grisly to describe, scrupulously observed in a small room which I have seen. It is fitted like an operating theatre and is within the walls of the Jewish cemetery. I imagine that this custom has lapsed in Western countries, for certainly I never heard of it elsewhere, even in that Israelitish stronghold, New York. Dressed in his jarmulka and halat, the Jew is not supposed to enter the public gardens. It is not a deprivation which he feels acutely, for he is not a fresh-air

loving person, but, because they are forbidden, the parks have a fascination for him. Outside the Lazienski Gardens, where nestles Poniatovski's toy palace, I used to see young men in this costume looking longingly through the railings. They also dream, but, unlike the Poles, their dreams take tangible and unpleasant shape, and it is on account of certain youths of this type that the Warsaw police wear Mauser pistols on their belts and go in couples after nightfall in special districts of the city.

Warsaw never inspired me with affection. There were too many elements in it warring for supremacy, but I could see its possibilities. Given the opportunity, the harsh note of its life may change to something softer and more melodious. The Poles will always dream, for it is ineradicable in their nature, but they may some day be less discontented. The Jews may cease from troubling and turn all their abilities to smuggling over the frontier—an exciting and profitable game hitherto—and then, over all, the bells of St. Alexander Nevsky will speak, not of domination, but of comradeship.

M. L.

A POLISH AIDE-DE-CAMP OF NAPOLEON

POSSIBLY you may remember Vladislas, the little Pole, who embodied in his fragile form many of the inconsistencies which go to make up the Polish character. His proportions, mental and physical, were not cast in an heroic mould, but he could claim a certain spiritual kinship with his dashing compatriot whose deeds I am about to chronicle.

Properly to understand the Polish nature is to find the master-key to that riddle which has vexed diplomatists and politicians alike since the days of the great Catherine. The Pole is such a strange mass of contradictions. In a breath, he is subtle or silly, brave to a fault or a hopeless bravado, an aristocrat with the keenest sense of all that term implies or a bully to those under his thumb. A schemer always, his most carefully laid plans fail because he is imbued with a consuming suspicion born of century-long intrigue,

while coherence of plan and action are doomed in his adventures because he is as distrustful of his own kith and kin as of his rulers. Intellectually brilliant, perverse, temperamental, devoid of logic, extravagant, passionate, usually extremely handsome, a dreamer of dreams, the Polish nobleman is an enigma lacking any of those strong traits which make appeal to international sympathy. Alexander I. and his successor, Nicholas I., really meant well by Poland. History bears testimony to that fact. And history equally records the misdirected Polish actions which resulted in the revolutions of 1830 and 1861—ill-conceived, badly organised, and totally wrong headed. Yet, at the back of these abortive attempts lay a vein of patriotism, illogical though it was, and obviously the result of overwhelming impulse. Impulse! Perhaps that is the predominant characteristic of the Poles; that same quality which has made their name historic upon the battlefield for valour, and which lends romance to my little-known hero, Krasinski.

It must have been about 1780 that Vincent Korwin, Count Krasinski, first saw the light of day, but the exact date matters little. Like the prince in the fairy tale, he was endowed with

beauty, bravery and fabulous wealth, and his exploits read like those of Roland, the hero of Roncesvalles, while his gallantry bade fair to outrival that of the Cavaliers under the Merrie Monarch. Napoleon once called him, "One of the bravest, most faithful and most dangerous of my courtiers," and whether in love or war the last attribute was equally applicable. For was he not renowned for the deadly accuracy of his aim with a pistol, and could he not defend himself with a lance against superior numbers without sustaining the slightest injury? In repartee he was unequalled, though he never descended to sarcasm; his generosity was lavish, and his kindness and good nature knew no bounds. Small wonder, then, that he was the delight of the fair sex and the idol of his fellow officers. I am indebted to his kinsman, Count Henry Krasinski, for many illuminating details about this flower of chivalry, which he modestly placed in the appendix of a little volume of his own creation, dedicated to the Sultan of Turkey and written, as he frankly states in the preface, "with an anti-Russian sentiment and consequently pleasing to England." Times have changed since the date of its publication in 1858! Nevertheless, the

opinion of a Pole concerning his compatriot is valuable as being, possibly, more sympathetic than that of a less unprejudiced Westerner.

History, I fancy, does not relate the alarm of the Prussian masters of Warsaw on a certain occasion when the booming of cannon was heard throughout the city, when church bells pealed from every tower, and when the populace seemed agitated by some unexplained emotion. Was it an insurrection, a plot against their Prussian rulers? Far from it: these signs and portents merely indicated that a son had been born to Count Vincent Krasinski—a son, by the way, who could never succeed to the title. "Then," says his admiring cousin, "there was a regular levee at his palace; eloquent speeches were delivered, five hundred bottles of champagne were beheaded, thousands of pounds in money and clothing were distributed to the poor, and £15,000 were settled on the mother and child. No human being ever came into this world under more noisy and favourable circumstances for the prosperity of his fellow creatures."

Unfortunately the baby soon died, and his mother, the beautiful Tekla, followed him shortly after, and Count Vincent sought solace in cards.

At this pastime he once lost £25,000 in an evening. It was his habit, while playing, to keep his cab waiting and, as the game frequently lasted all day, the cabby's harvest was a rich one. On one occasion, however, his profits were even greater than he had anticipated, and the little story well illustrates several traits of the Polish nature. The noble Count, on a certain evening, had won £500, contrary to his usual custom of losing. Whether he had celebrated the event, or whether his mind was absorbed in higher matters, I cannot say. The fact is that he left the whole of his winnings in the cab. Being an honest man, the driver called next morning early and handed the missing treasure to its owner, who thanked him, made a note of his name, gave him a glass of wine, and shook him warmly by the hand. The honest man was slightly disappointed and turned dejectedly to leave. At this psychological moment the Count called him back and thrust into his hands not five pounds, nor ten, nor even fifty, but the whole five hundred—a sum which enabled him to live comfortably for the rest of his days. Grandiose, theatrical, impulsive and wholly Polish!

Eventually Count Vincent drifted to Napoleon's

side, and that genius shrewdly appreciated his ability, and was blind to his weaknesses—except when they clashed with his own. Napier, in his "History of the Peninsular War," gives additional evidence of the value of Napoleon's judgment, which he relates in so clear a manner that one cannot better it. On the 30th November, 1808, the French advanced guard reached the foot of the Samosierra which blocked the road to Madrid. The heights were held by Spanish troops numbering ten or twelve thousand men, under General San Juan. The ascent was steep, and was commanded by sixteen pieces of Spanish artillery and further strengthened by entrenchments. The French commenced the assault at daybreak.

"At this moment Napoleon arrived. He rode into the mouth of the pass, and attentively examined the scene before him. The infantry were making no progress; a thick fog mixed with smoke hung upon the ascent; suddenly, as if by inspiration, he ordered the Polish lancers of his guard to charge up the causeway and seize the Spanish battery. The first squadron was thrown into confusion by a fire which levelled the foremost ranks. General Krasinski rallied them in a moment, and under cover of the smoke, and the

thick vapours of the morning, the regiment, with a fresh impetus, proceeded briskly up the mountain, sword in hand. As those gallant horsemen passed, all the Spanish infantry fired and fled from the entrenchments on each side, towards the summit of the causeway; so that, when the Poles fell in among the gunners and took the battery, the whole Spanish army was in flight, abandoning arms, ammunition, baggage and a number of prisoners. This surprising exploit, in the glory it conferred on one party and the disgrace it heaped upon the other, can hardly be paralleled in the annals of war. The charge of the Poles, viewed as a simple military operation, was extravagantly foolish, but taken as the result of Napoleon's sagacious estimate of the real value of Spanish troops and his promptitude in seizing the advantage offered by the smoke and fog that clung to the side of the mountain, it was a felicitous example of intuitive genius."

"Now, my dear Krasinski," said Napoleon, on that famous day, "I believe in wonders." "It would be a wonder, Sire," replied the latter, "if there was one single soldier under my command who would hesitate an instant to sacrifice the last drop of his blood for your Majesty's glory."

Krasinski's deeds and wit produced substantial rewards, and "the Polish Alcibiades," as Napoleon dubbed him, was always short of money. "You have debts, Krasinski," said the Emperor one day, on seeing his favourite's face unusually sad. "Yes, Sire, I have." "Then your debts are mine." Three times they were paid at the cost of £30,000, and Krasinski's rival, Duroc, was loud in his protestations. "Give him £6000 more," said Napoleon, mischievously, and, as Duroc exclaimed in horror, "add another £3000." "The interest," said the Polish Alcibiades, gracefully, "is worthy of your Majesty." In all, Napoleon's favours, translated into hard cash, totalled the respectable sum of £100,000.

But though the battlefield and the boudoir found the Count in his true element, yet I can imagine that he was not averse to his reception at Posen in 1814, when the Polish legions returned to their native land. Krasinski, in his lancer uniform of blue edged with crimson and laced with gold, must have been a fine figure. His breast was covered with medals, and on his head was a crimson cap adorned with a golden sun and a white plume. Cheers and sobs shook the spectators at the vision of their brave countrymen,

victors of many battles; and twenty-four beautiful women, dressed in white, threw wreaths of flowers over the warriors as they sat, mounted on superb horses, with lances gleaming in the sun. Then, to quote Count Henry, "the General delivered a speech during which, without any exaggeration, he put Cicero fairly in his pocket, and melted half a dozen Demosthenes on his lips. After repeated huzzas he was obliged to submit his manly cheeks to the repeated kisses of the maidens"—a penance, one would imagine, not unpleasing to him.

The last of Count Vincent's gallant adventures before he settled down to a comparatively uneventful middle age, was one scarcely in keeping with his generous gift to the cabman. Having heard that his mother, who still retained a large fortune, was lending a willing ear to the slander of certain ill-disposed relatives, and was likely to cut him off with the proverbial shilling, he decided to improve the situation. Uninvited, he presented himself at the maternal castle in Podolia, and remained there three weeks, having as fellow-guest one of the slandering relations—fortunately for him, of the opposite sex. So well did he employ his time that the lady became his

warmest advocate with his mother, and later took her broken heart to the seclusion of a convent. It is safe to say that this latter fact disturbed the Count but little, as he had achieved his end.

We see him later, full of years and honours, an habitué of the Russian Court, where his scarred old face and his wonderful sword—a gift from the Marshals of France—were doubtless well known. In his spare moments he occupied himself with writing his memoirs—never, to my knowledge, given to the public—and the rest of the time he employed in gambling and in recounting his achievements in love and war. I leave the last word to Count Henry. "The Krasinskis" (he might have said "the Poles") "are liberal, brave, at times excitable, slightly proud and whimsical, rather fond of the fair sex and of jesting. They possess strong perceptive powers, are grateful for the slightest mark of kindness, and yet are often difficult to please."

Better epitaph had no Pole than this.

M. L.

TANIA'S ORTHODOXY

IT was Tania's suggestion. Olga, her obedient sister, seconded it and Poushok (Russian for eiderdown), a large, very fat Samoyede dog, warmly supported it. Personally I had qualms. Picnics, as I had hitherto encountered them, invariably degenerated into aimless pilgrimages to nominal beauty spots, followed by uncomfortable and scrappy meals at which wasps figured largely as uninvited guests. But Tania had a will which brooked little interference; doubts as to the weather were swept contemptuously aside, and it was arranged that we should go by train to Vassilkov, a village some twenty versts from Kieff and in the midst of pine woods, on the following Sunday. My part in the proceedings turned out to be the carrying of a parcel containing a species of delectable, though squashy, pastry, with which a number of hard-boiled eggs had been thoughtfully packed. It was wrapped in a copy of the *Kievlanin*, the local

paper, which speedily showed its objection to being used for this vulgar purpose. Frankly it was an ugly parcel, but was in a way typical. During a long sojourn in Russia I have only once seen a really tidy parcel, such as one associates with the Army and Navy Stores, and that came from an English shop in Moscow. Tania carried a bulbous looking packet containing tea, sugar and bananas, these latter a great luxury costing about twenty-five copecks each; and Olga, who was particular as to her appearance, avowed that she had plenty to do in looking after Poushok. I suggested that bread had been forgotten, and asked how we were to find a samovar for our tea, to which Tania replied that we should undoubtedly discover both somewhere, though she neglected to say how. But then, by nature, she took most things on faith, material things, that is, in which she proved herself a strict follower of apostolic admonition though, to be sure, she never read the Bible. But of this more anon.

We were fortunate in finding seats in a third-class carriage of a train bound for Odessa, our own destination being the first stop. The other occupants were of the moujik class, and they accepted our presence in the most matter-of-fact

way. They chatted to us and were only mildly interested when Tania, with youthful enthusiasm, described me as an Englishman of vast importance to whom she wished to show a typical "Little Russian" village. Vassilkov proved to be blazing hot, and our journey, which had occupied a full hour, had made us inclined for nothing so much as a rest in the shade where we could discuss the contents of my parcel—which were rapidly disintegrating—to the accompaniment of a glass of tea. And I admit that my heart sank as I wondered where on earth the miraculous samovar could spring from in this wilderness.

The term "wilderness" is literally incorrect. Vassilkov consists of a small village around which cluster, in the pine woods, numbers of "datchas," or bungalows, belonging to well-to-do Kievans, and occupied only in the summer. The air is wonderful, the quiet refreshing, and the scent of the pines extremely soothing. But for the mundane individual who wants material necessaries at a moment's notice, it is a bad spot as there are no shops.

We tramped along the forest paths, and I admired the datchas with their decorated verandas and their idle, lounging occupants.

Then I uttered a mild protest, and suggested that at the railway station we could have found a samovar, and that toiling along in the noonday sun and with no particular end in view, did not appear to me the acme of enjoyment. "Englishmen are always impatient," remarked Tania; in parenthesis, I was the first she had ever met, "as if I can find a suitable datcha in two minutes." "Datcha?" I said surprised. "What on earth do you mean? Why are you looking for one?" "Because I wish to eat in comfort," was Tania's reply, and then she added cheerfully, "This one will do nicely." It was a charming datcha, there was no denying it, and I meekly followed my leader. Poushok barked approval, and Olga said she would be glad to adjust her veil. Evidently, I thought, friends of theirs live here, and they have been having a game with me.

Hearing our footsteps, an aged man appeared from nowhere. "Your master is away, I think," hazarded Tania. "That is so," replied the ancient. "Then," said Tania, with a wicked little smile, "you will permit me to use the balcony while I and my friends have our lunch. All we want is a samovar and some bread. My dog's name is Poushok, he never bites. This is

a most distinguished Englishman, and I am looking after him, and this is my sister." There was the flash of a fifty copeck piece changing owners, and the way was clear. Somehow I thought of England and burst into a loud guffaw. Imagine going up to a house at the seaside, a nice house with a pretty garden, and sending for the caretaker to say you would like tea on the veranda, bread and a steaming kettle to be included! And imagine the caretaker who would permit it, and the consummate impertinence which would demand it! That was why I laughed heartily, and why I had to explain at length the reason of my merriment which Tania at first seemed to think quite out of place.

"But," I said later, as I lolled in great comfort and surveyed the dusty road, "how do you know a house is unoccupied when you carry out this nefarious practice?" Tania twinkled. It was her habit to shake with concealed mirth when she had astonished me in any direction. "Am I not a disciple of the great Sherlock Golmes? (There is no H in Russian). I always read him. It is easy with deduction to know when the family is away and, after all, what harm is done? Anton, or whatever his name is, has fifty copecks more—

that is all. Papasha only allows me two roubles for my Sunday treat, and this," with a wave of her hand, " is worth a quarter of it in my opinion." As is often the case, most is learnt when least expected !

Tania had prattled nonsense for some time when she suddenly espied the local " pope," or Orthodox priest, out for his afternoon airing. I must admit that thereon she acted in a most reprehensible manner. In the baldest of English, she went through all the motions of averting the " evil eye." Probably I looked a query mark, for she explained, " I always do that when I see a pope ; they bring bad luck."

Why or how she did not deign to say. " I go to church once a year, and that is quite sufficient," she continued.

" Then you don't keep the Fasts ? " I asked.

" Of course not," replied Tania, " I regard eating as one of the greatest pleasures of life. Don't you ? You will admit you raved over the spinach soup we had the other day, and you always say that Russian cooking is the best in the world. I suppose all churches are the same—they invariably forbid the nicest things."

" But you are Orthodox, Tania Ivanovna ? "

"Undoubtedly," was the reply, "I shall be married in the Vladimirsky Sobor some day, I suppose, and equally I shall lie in the cemetery by the railway station if I am fool enough to die in Kieff. But then, you wouldn't understand; one can dislike priests and still belong to the Church."

"But," I said, "don't you think that some day the Orthodox and Western Churches will come to an understanding, that there will be a fusion, that the differences separating the Creeds will be swept away and that——" I had no time to say more.

Tania interrupted me with vehemence. "Sometimes I think you are very silly! Don't you know that Russia is the Church and the Church is Russia? Lots of us don't believe much in it—laugh at the priests and dislike the interminable services. I know plenty of girls in the Gymnasium who believe in all sorts of other things; spiritualism, which I love myself—seeing a table jump is so exciting—theosophy, or else in nothing at all. But it anyone interfered with the Church and denationalised it, all of them would support Orthodoxy tooth and nail in a moment. Look how our soldiers die and how in the Japanese war, the popes often led them. The popes were

sometimes braver than our officers then." A tinge of real seriousness crept into her voice. "We Russians are probably the most religious people on earth, and that is why we are always trying to get beyond the barriers and discover new truths. We are not afraid of experimenting, but we have had too much foreign thought thrust upon us. At any rate, Orthodoxy is innately Russian from beginning to end, and I regard it as an emblem of the nation. As I say, you won't understand it, but Orthodoxy and Russia are one and the same thing, and to separate them would be to kill both."

I recall that conversation in these days of Russia's trial. Tania was right; Orthodoxy is proving the soul of Mother Russia and has called her children back to her arms.

A. L.

THE SONG OF THE MOUJIK

IT has often appeared to me that the rural peasantry of Russia, the moujik class, offer the closest approach to actual expression of soul that the world knows to-day. Their lives afford them opportunity for first-hand communion with nature and, in a mysterious way, they seem to be in touch with the Infinite, with that intangible "Beyond," which still provides platform argument for Western savants. The silence of the illimitable steppe, the whisper of the northern breeze amongst the pine trees, the solemn gloom of the deep forest glades, the gently falling snow—harbinger alike of the grim winter and of the joyous spring thereafter, the soothing lap of the mighty, dreamy river against its banks as it lazily meanders seaward, each has its message to the moujik. The habitual loneliness of his life has taught him to look for consolation to those cosmic forces which are beyond mortal control, rather than to human aid, with the result that,

in a manner, he has created of them channels for the expression of his innermost being, which may be interpreted as his soul. And the manner of this mirroring is melody—the melody of his songs. Civilisation, with its telephones, its wireless, its railways and its thousand and one evidences of advance, has swept away, if not the desire, at least the opening for that primitive simplicity from which spring the most beautiful things of the heart. Convention demands that thought shall run in certain well-defined grooves; those who depart therefrom are necessarily either cranks or humbugs; thus argue the followers of convention!

Yet no one in his senses would maintain that the music-hall ditty was the expression of anything beyond the desire on the part of the composer to make money. No one would say that here was reflected the soul of a people. It seems almost as though mechanical and scientific advance had been accompanied by a corresponding retrogression in matters intrinsically spiritual, and as though the soul—the driving though invisible force of a nation as well as of the individual—had become so encumbered and overlaid with novel fancies and new fads that it was dying from want of a pure atmosphere. It is materialism of every

kind, which infects every department of our daily life, which has killed the expression of our innermost conception and has rendered us commonplace in execution. Withal, sincerity is lacking; there is spiritual sincerity as well as earthly, and, with regard to the former, we are too clogged with undigested theories to admit of our unfolding with simplicity that sentiment which really governs our deepest convictions—the sentiment of the soul. In this direction we have much to learn from the Slav, for he is unfettered by convention, while Tartar and Polish domination alike, as well as serfdom, contributed rather to intensify the mental rebellion against mere mundane forms and to turn the individual ever more and more into spiritual companionship with his "ego," which alone could remain untouched. I believe that those who have experience will admit that in the melody of the Russian folk-song musical temperament discovers its truest outlet.

Listen to the young girls singing as they drive in their rough, home-made sleigh, clinging to the heavy pile of firewood they have gathered. No words are needed. They are apostrophising the winter for being so long: they are telling him that with spring comes young love; that, as the

bud bursts on the tree with the new warmth of the sun, so will they feel the fire of life in their veins and the quicker pulsing of their hearts, when the world wakes once more, abrim with the joy of creation.

Or again, a strain of melancholy may be detected. It sounds like some wild protest against fate, and the despair becomes more and more apparent until, with a final wail, the plaint dies down into silence. Curiosity fires me, and I inquire the name of the melody. My driver smiles. "It is only a peasant song, Barin; you can't exactly give it any name, but it describes the feelings of a riderless horse in a pine forest; his master is dead and he, finding no shelter and brooding over his loss, also dies." Very simple, very primitive, but full of that deep sympathy and understanding for dumb animals which permits of the Orthodox Church remembering them in her litany, and which assigns to them, also, their place in the realms of God. And so on throughout the whole of the Russian folk-songs. They are replete with just that sentiment which, being primal in its significance, faithfully voices the otherwise unexpressed yearnings of the heart in all its variants of grave and gay, and which

belongs to the category of that which we should be frankly ashamed to make confession. Emotion is only made to be suppressed—such is the dictum of the conventionalist. Pathos must be manufactured to suit the multitude from the cheapest and often the most unlovely aspects of life. The dietary provided would be nauseating were the palate cleaner. But after the war things will never be quite the same again. The general hypocrisy which marked the national life will have been swept away. Simple ideals, simple thought, a simplified existence, will take its place. That will be the time when we shall truly understand the song of the moujik. Nature—greatest of all teachers—shall be the guide, and once more the curtains of the soul shall be drawn and the reasonings of the heart shall illumine the dark places.

A. L.

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RUSSIAN RAILWAY ADVANCE

I

A FEW days ago an inconspicuous paragraph in the papers announced that the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons Lits had arranged a through service of dining and sleeping cars between Moscow and Archangel. Behind that bald statement lies somewhat of romance.

Only since the commencement of the war is it that Russia has grown to value her northern Governments, and has actually rediscovered Archangel, a port which, for some years, has been steadily declining. "Before the war"—the phrase has already a prehistoric ring—the journey from Petrograd to Archangel was one not readily to be undertaken, and, in fact, required the skill of the experienced traveller. In itself the distance was nothing, that is, as distances go in Russia. Petrograd to Vologda was approximately the

same mileage as Moscow to the latter delectable spot, and, since it was covered in comfortable carriages of the Russian State Railway, it might almost be said not to count.

But there was the awkward "beyond." The "beyond" consisted of the four hundred miles separating Vologda and Archangel. Since private initiative, as represented in this latter railway, was at loggerheads with governmental control, as represented by the former, no sort of satisfactory train connection was either attempted or thought desirable. The unfortunate passenger for Archangel merely arrived at Vologda, was dumped upon its platform amid the commiseration of his fellow-travellers and the train officials, and, willy nilly, was obliged to await the departure, at the pleasure of the engine-driver (so it always appeared), of the train for Archangel. From this it must not be inferred that he, the passenger, was ever the victim of either discourtesy or ill-temper. The Russian rarely loses his temper, and is never discourteous. But procrastination, as applied to public service, used to be second nature to him. It may here be emphasised that the change at Vologda was necessitated by the fact that the line thence to Archangel was of a different

gauge to that of the Russian State Railways, actually of so narrow a gauge that when one saw the locomotive and its carriages one was irresistibly reminded of a toy-shop.

Everything connected with the "*make-up*" of this miniature line appeared to be on the same scale, with the exception of the enormous dignity of the officials directly concerned. For its population, the Archangel-Vologda train carried more officials than probably any other railway service in the world. Their chief concern, most decidedly, had no regard for the comfort of the luckless patrons; a dining car was unknown, though the journey consumed twenty hours; as often as not the arbitrary ukase of the Superintendent at Vologda decreed, "No first class carriages," in spite of the fact that the said patrons had paid for first-class accommodation, and, of course, their money was never refunded; and when the train eventually did saunter off on its four-hundred-mile ramble, it did so with such disconcerting promptitude that people who had been awaiting this moment for the best part of a day were frequently left behind.

I recall very well the uncompromising look of dubiety which crossed the face of a friend in

Petrograd when I announced to him that I was taking my wife to Archangel. "She'll never stand the journey, my dear chap, I'm perfectly certain she won't. But, if you insist on going, buy a regular hamper at Elisieff, and prepare for the worst."

As a matter of fact, we did not buy the hamper, and, moreover, we neglected to lay in any stores at Vologda, trusting to the buffet at Niandoma—then a hamlet half way to Archangel, and now an important railway centre. But in those old pre-war days, before the gauge had been altered, and when the toy engine puffed with its toy train into the toy station, Niandoma was a truly ghastly place. Half an hour before reaching it, anywhere between seven and nine in the evening, the occupants of the train were awake and on the alert. The moujik meant to get to his samovar, and the better-class passenger to his soup—if there was any. As the train slowed down the carriage doors were thrown open, and, quite regardless of a possible fall, men, women, and children streamed across the shallow platform, and made for the one door which led to the actuality of their dreams—the buffet.

I remember emerging thence with all the

plunder I could secure for a hungry wife; some pink sausage which cried to Heaven, half a loaf of black bread and a piece of rusty cheese. That was all one could look for until arriving at Archangel the following morning.

I admit that meandering slowly through the untrodden and fragrant pine forests which cover this northern land prevented any tinge of pessimism from colouring one's mental attitude. Only those who have experienced it know just what Northern Russia means when the winter snows have gone and that remote world is bursting into the vigour of its adolescence. Then it is a world of wonder, a world of mystery, a world in touch with another Beyond—the Beyond of the intangible, the Beyond of the soul.

Next morning came Isaacogorka, the last station on the line, and its practical terminus, since the town of Archangel is thoughtfully situated on the opposite bank of the swift-flowing Dwina, and its point of approach varies according to the season of the year. In the bad old days of 1914, Isaacogorka was as inhospitable a spot as the mind of man, assisted by Nature, could devise. True, there was a railway station of the toy type; there was also a station master,

resplendent in blue and gold ; and there were one or two sleepy porters. But buffet there was none, accommodation none, waiting-room none, comfort none. All that was to be found on the other side of the three-quarter mile stretch of muddy water which separated one from Archangel.

But with the war has come a change. I have neglected to say that the toy railway, with its narrow gauge and its crude discomforts, was German in origin and administration. And I like to believe that the advent of the standard broad gauge, of the wagons lits, and of Slav administration may spell a renaissance of the Russian North which shall make itself felt from the newly-opened harbour of Alexandrovsk to the still lonely shores of the Petchora River.

II

Closely following upon the rediscovery of Archangel by Russia, consequent upon the war, came the rediscovery of the ice-free harbour of Alexandrovsk. As long ago as 1901 a settlement had been built there, replete with public buildings, church, hospital, school, and all the appurtenances which go to make up a town of first-class importance. True, population was lacking, and the

situation was not one likely to attract even the most enterprising of pioneers. Tucked away in Kola Fiord, a narrow lonely arm of the Arctic Ocean, some sixty miles east of the Norwegian frontier, for five months in the year there is practically perpetual night. Moreover, trees are unknown, vegetation is non-existent, and for leagues in every direction, except seawards, the eye rests only upon gaunt, scarred, jagged rocks. But Count de Witte fully realised the potential value of Alexandrovsk as a port of supply in the event of war, and willingly financed the somewhat grandiose schemes of its founder, Count Engelhardt, at that date Governor of Archangel Province. Then, as so often happens in Russia, where continuity of policy is rendered difficult by frequent administrative changes in Petrograd, Alexandrovsk was forgotten. A vessel of the Murman Steamship Company visited it once a month in summer, and brought supplies to the few fisher folk who made it their headquarters; for the rest, the public buildings, the school, the hospital, and the other appurtenances gently deteriorated, forming an instructive monument to a proud scheme foolishly neglected by an obtuse bureaucracy. August, 1914, witnessed its

re-birth, and Imperial sanction was immediately forthcoming for the construction of a railway which should connect it with Petrograd.

For this purpose there were two possible routes, the shorter being a continuation of the existing Finnish railway from its terminus at Tornea, directly overland to Alexandrovsk. This, however, would have necessitated some three hundred miles of constructional work through a totally uninhabited country offering every known difficulty to the engineers. The alternative and longer route, therefore, was decided upon, the direction from Petrograd being Petrozavodsk (the capital of Olonetz Province) and thence to Kovda and Kandalaksha, on the White Sea, whence the line would cross the Kola Peninsula to its destination. This route possesses the additional advantage of being not solely a strategic line, but of opening up a great area of country which badly needs some means of communication with the outside world, and which gives promise of a speedy material development.

Kovda, in spite of its isolation hitherto, is a prosperous little town, and boasts of the only cinema on the White Sea littoral. In summer there is naturally no difficulty in changing the

films, but in winter the proprietor of the picture-drome—who for his enterprise assuredly deserves success—is obliged to send by sleigh to Uleaborg, a distance of about three hundred miles, in order to get fresh stock. But if the films travel far, so do those who patronise the performances.

Distance means nothing to those who live their lives in these northern vastnesses, and a hundred miles each way to visit the pictures arouses no special comment. And incidentally the films shown belong to no out-of-date category; Charlie Chaplin is as familiar to the good folk of Kovda as he is to the ordinary British cinema goer.

Kandalaksha is a different story. At present it consists of a few houses, a tiny church, and a cemetery—an uncomfortably large cemetery. In appearance and situation it seems to denote the end of all things, geographical and material. It lies at the head of a narrow gorge some miles from the actual sea, and is surrounded by scrub-covered hills, which rarely lack snow. The silence here is intense; it can almost be felt, and the sensation is uncanny. Actually, the scenery is as beautiful as the heart of man can desire, and I should not be surprised if, in time to come, when the ubiquitous wagons lits from

Petrograd carry the curious sight-seer to Alexandrovsk, Kandalaksha does not come into its own as a tourist resort.

The line thence to Alexandrovsk passes through a very difficult country, which is remarkable in that there is but little wild life in its recesses. Bears are quite unknown. I am acquainted with a Kovda timber merchant, who, in fourteen years' wandering in and around the Kola Peninsula, has never encountered one. Ground game is very rare, and bird life is none too abundant. It is a land of marsh, of stunted vegetation; a land of depression, deepened and accentuated with every mile travelled in a northerly direction until the Alexandrovsk zone is reached—the zone of nothingness. But of all new railway construction in Russia, none will afford more of interest in the development which will follow.

The country traversed, especially in the Province of Olonetz, belongs to the period of ancient Russia and has remained undisturbed for centuries. This is the land whither the pious monks of the Orthodox Church wended their perilous way in those early days when Russia was slowly being evolved out of a chaos of semi-independent appanages. Their presence it was which first

brought a rough civilisation into this primitive stronghold. To this day one comes unexpectedly upon vast monasteries, built obviously to withstand siege, with walls loop-holed and buttressed, while within one finds, besides the churches—of these there are generally several—houses for inhabitants as well as the main monastic building, houses for those, in fact, who worked for their spiritual masters, and, incidentally, profited well by their devotion.

After the war it is quite reasonable to suppose that what has been built as a strategic line may, for this cause, become popularised. For, in the summer, during the long white nights, I can imagine no journey which would carry with it more of fascination, interest, and romance to those who would know Russia as she is than this itinerary would provide. Russia is so large a country that the average traveller usually lacks time to study all its phases, and hence, as often as not, is attracted towards the large towns along the easiest lines of communication. But, in so doing, he misses the sweetness of the Russian land as it is in its primitive quiet; a sweetness which is not explicable in words, but which grows upon one and leaves lasting and ineradicable impressions upon the heart.

A. L.

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